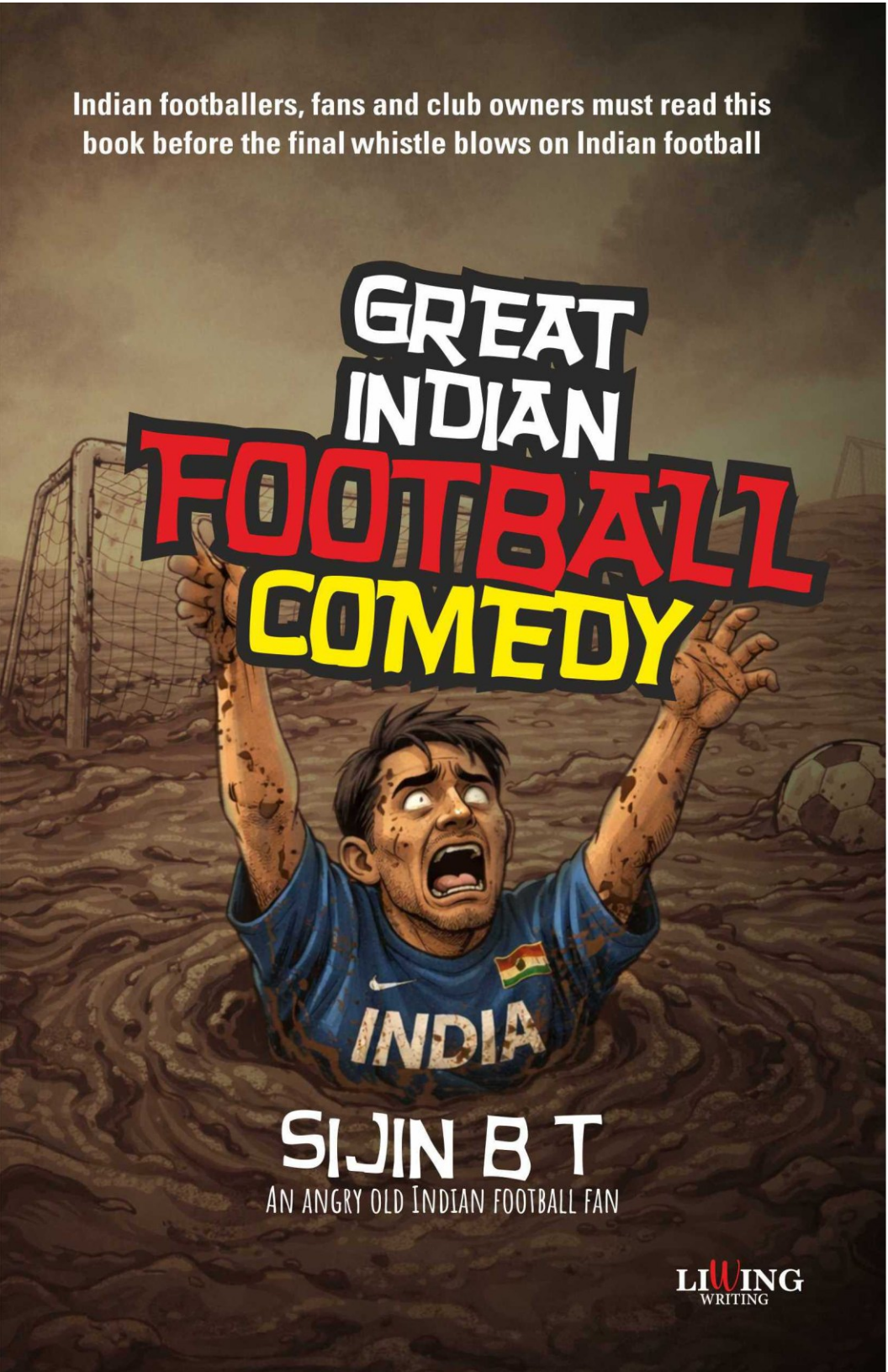


Indian footballers, fans and club owners must read this book before the final whistle blows on Indian football

GREAT INDIAN FOOTBALL COMEDY



SIJIN B T

AN ANGRY OLD INDIAN FOOTBALL FAN

LIVING
WRITING



GOAL 2066

ONE DREAM | ONE GOAL

We dream of the day thousands of Indians invade the lush green football ground by waving the 'made in India' tricolour flag; Indian players toss their sweat-wet blue jerseys in the beautiful blue sky; an Indian player kicks the 'Made in India' world cup ball to the gallery where thousands of Indians stand by raising their fists and billions of Indians dance in front of the different 'Make in India' live streaming screens, while the final whistle of the finals of a world cup blows and all roars together "We won the World Cup."



**SPORTS & MANAGEMENT
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MAKING INDIA SPORTS SUPERPOWER

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**“Arise! Awake! and stop not until
the goal is reached.”**

Swami Vivekananda



GREAT INDIAN FOOTBALL COMEDY

SIJIN B T

LIWING
WRITING



Author
Sijin B T

Design
Liwing

Copyright
Sports & Management Research Institute

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**NO TIME FOR PREFACE. IT'S AN
EMERGENCY. WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING
BEFORE THIS CRISIS BECOMES A
DISASTER.**

**THANKS TO ALL WHO CREATED THIS
CRISIS**

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IF WE CAN **DREAM** IT, WE CAN **DO** IT.



WE EMPOWER INDIA TO **DREAM** AND **DO**

11 SPORTY YEARS OF
TRANSFORMING
INDIAN SPORTS



**SPORTS & MANAGEMENT
RESEARCH INSTITUTE**
MAKING INDIA SPORTS SUPERPOWER

JUST A STORY

Once, a powerful minister was invited to inaugurate a football match.

He arrived with sirens, garlands, photographers, and a long speech about youth development and sporting excellence. After cutting the ribbon and kicking the ceremonial first ball carefully, so as not to crease his dhoti, he took his seat in the VIP gallery.

For the first ten minutes, he watched the game silently. Then confusion appeared on his face. He called the match organiser and whispered, with genuine concern:

"Why are all twenty-two boys running behind one ball?"

The organiser smiled nervously and said,

"Sir... this is football."

The minister frowned.

"This is very inefficient," he said.

"So much running, so much fighting. Why create unnecessary tension?"

"Give one ball to each player. Everyone will be happy."

The organiser tried to explain the game.

The minister interrupted.

"No, no. This is India. We believe in inclusion. We are a socialist republic. We love peace. Nobody should lose. Nobody should feel bad."

Orders were passed immediately.

Twenty-two balls were brought onto the field. Each player now had one. The whistle blew.

What Happened Next?

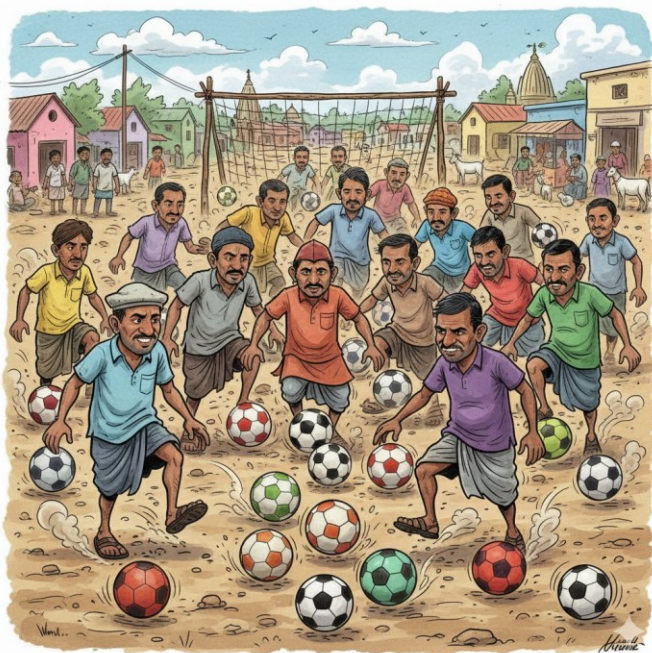
No passing, No defending, No attacking, No goals, No winners. No losers

Players dribbled alone, collided accidentally, stopped, looked around, and wondered why they were even there. The crowd fell silent.

After five minutes, the minister clapped happily and said,

"Excellent match! Very peaceful. No fights."

Then he left, satisfied.



FOOTBALL DRIVEN BY POLITICS & POLICIES

**“You will be nearer to heaven
through football than through the
study of the Gita”**

Swami Vivekananda

1

A NATIONAL ILLOGICALITY

**“Come, be men! Come out of your
narrow holes and have a look
abroad. See how nations are on the
march! Do you love your country?
Then come, let us struggle for
higher and better things; look not
back, no, not even if you see the
dearest and nearest cry. Look not
back, but forward!”**

Swami Vivekananda

India is a nation with a legacy that stretches thousands of years, a present marked by economic confidence, and a promising future. From space technology to digital payments, from pharmaceuticals to diplomacy, India today stands shoulder to shoulder with the world's leading nations. Indians occupy boardrooms, research labs, parliaments, and sporting arenas across continents.

Yet, in the world of football, the world's most popular sport, India projects a painfully small, almost embarrassing figure.

This contradiction is not accidental. It is created. And it is what can only be described as **The Great Indian Football Comedy**.

Football is not merely a sport; it is a measure of a nation's strength and competence. Nations far smaller than India, such as Croatia, Uruguay, Senegal, and Morocco, use football to announce themselves to the world. Their flags fly at World Cups; their leagues feed the global talent pipeline; their systems produce identity and pride.

India, despite being the world's most populous nation and among the fastest-growing economies, remains a comedy in global football conversations. Our FIFA ranking floats in mediocrity. Our national team rarely features in tournaments that matter. Our clubs are invisible outside domestic borders.

For a nation aspiring to global leadership, **this is not just a sporting failure, but a total system breakdown.**



INDIAN FOOTBALL

Sleeping since the **1990s**

Scheduled wake-up **TBA**

(Former FIFA president **Sepp Blatter** had called **India** a 'sleeping giant'.)



INDIAN FOOTBALLERS

Sleepless & working in a gold mine for livelihood

(Arsene Wenger says Indian football is an unexplored gold mine.)



INDIAN FOOTBALL FANS

Sleeping since **December 2022**

Scheduled wake-up in **June 2026**



INDIAN FOOTBALL ADMINISTRATORS

Milking the dead cow!

“Come, be men! Come out of your narrow holes and have a look abroad. See how nations are on the march! Do you love your country?”

Swami Vivekananda

**“She is awakening, this motherland
of ours, from her deep long sleep.
None can desist her any more;
never is she going to sleep any
more; no outward powers can hold
her back any more; for the infinite
giant is rising to her feet.”**

Swami Vivekananda

2

SHOCKING NEWS

**"Each nation has a destiny to fulfil,
each nation has a message to
deliver, each nation has a mission
to accomplish."**

Swami Vivekananda

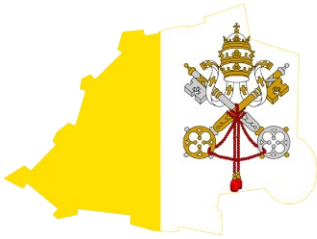


· CURAÇAO

Curaçao, with a population of 156,000, has become **the smallest country to qualify for the World Cup.**



Oh! My God



VATICAN

If **Pope Francis** lived another ten years, even the **Vatican**, the smallest and least populated nation, might have qualified for the Football World Cup.

But what about **India**? The world's most populous country and geographically one of the largest countries. **When will India qualify for the Football World Cup?**

**“All the powers in the universe are
already ours. It is we who have put
our hands before our eyes and cry
that it is dark.”**

Swami Vivekananda

3

THE PAINFUL TRUTH

**“The great national sin is the
neglect of the masses, and that is
one of the causes of our downfall.”**

Swami Vivekananda



1.		United States	\$30.51 trillion	6.		United Kingdom	\$3.84 trillion
2.		China	\$19.23 trillion	7.		France	\$3.21 trillion
3.		Germany	\$4.74 trillion	8.		Italy	\$2.19 trillion
4.		India	\$4.19 trillion	9.		Canada	\$2.24 trillion
5.		Japan	\$4.19 trillion	10.		Brazil	\$2.13 trillion

INDIA IS THE ONLY NATION AMONG THE WORLD'S TOP 10 ECONOMIES THAT HAS NEVER PLAYED THE FOOTBALL WORLD CUP.



 United States 1st 0.0744	 Russia 2nd 0.0788	 China 2nd 0.0788	 India 4th 0.1184	 South Korea 5th 0.1656
 United Kingdom 6th 0.1785	 Japan 7th 0.1839	 France 8th 0.1878	 Türkiye 9th 0.1902	 Italy 10th 0.2164

INDIA IS THE ONLY NATION AMONG THE WORLD'S TOP 10 MILITARY POWERS THAT HAS NEVER PLAYED THE FOOTBALL WORLD CUP.



**INDIA IS THE ONLY NATION AMONG
THE WORLD'S TOP 10 NATIONS WITH
THE MOST SATELLITES IN SPACE THAT
HAS NEVER PLAYED THE FOOTBALL
WORLD CUP.**



INDIA'S FIFA RANKING:

142



A MIRROR OF STRUCTURAL DECAY

India's low and fluctuating FIFA ranking is often brushed aside as a "long-term project" problem. But rankings do not lie. They reflect **inconsistent international performances** and **the weak football ecosystem**.

Countries with fewer resources and smaller populations consistently outperform India because they have something India lacks: **a clear football ecosystem**.



INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE (ISL), THE SAVIOUR OF INDIAN FOOTBALL, IS ON VENTILATOR AND WAITING FOR A SAVIOUR.

The **Indian Super League (ISL)** once rescued Indian football from its death. It brought visibility, sponsors, broadcasters, and fans. It gave Indian players a professional stage and exposure to global standards.

Today, that same league stands weakened. Ambiguous calendars, unclear promotion–relegation pathways, and

conflicting interests have eroded trust among players, clubs, investors, and fans.

Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL), the promoters of the ISL, does not want to continue the show with the original Master Rights Agreement. Reason, **ISL is not making money**. So, FSDL wants to escape from the sinking ship.

“The chief cause of India’s ruin has been the monopolizing of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men.”

Swami Vivekananda

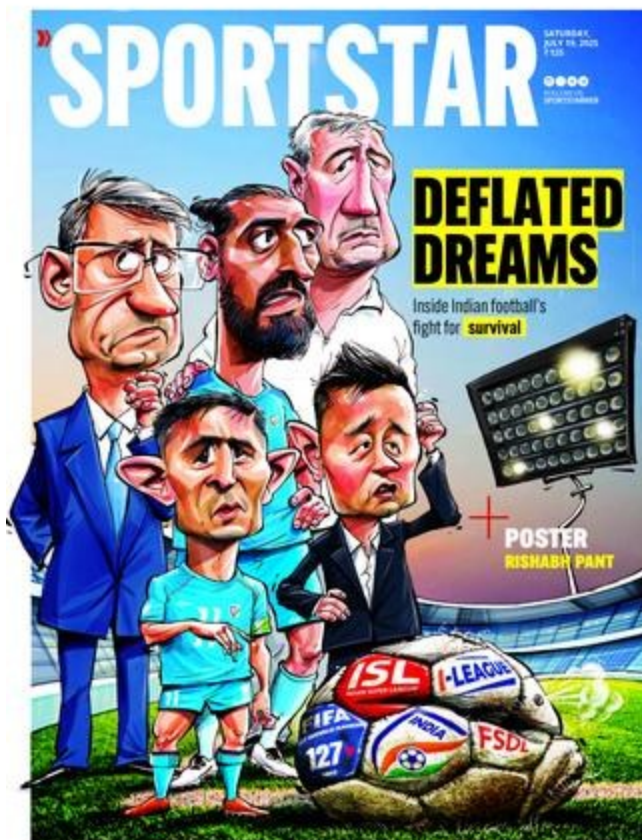


I-LEAGUE IS LIKE A LADY ALREADY WEAK, THEN BECOMING PREGNANT — MEANING ALREADY STRUGGLING, THEN AN EXTRA BURDEN COMES.

There is nothing much left to say about the **I-League** or many of its clubs because they stopped believing in themselves long ago. A football league cannot survive on nostalgia, history, or moral claims alone. It survives on **conviction, struggle, and institutional self-respect**. The I-League, unfortunately, surrendered all three.

Most I-League clubs never truly played for themselves or the league. They did not fight to strengthen it, market it, or demand sporting integrity. Instead, they lived as dependents, first on the AIFF, and later in the shadow of the ISL. Rather than proclaiming autonomy, they waited for handouts, exemptions, and temporary protections.

This dependency culture destroyed competitive hunger.



WHAT'S THE DREAM OF INDIA FOOTBALL? NOTHING. AIFF HAS JUST ONE GOAL- MAKE MONEY WITHOUT PLAYING FOOTBALL!! THEY DON'T WANT TO SWEAT.

All India Football Federation
Income and expenditure account for the year ended March 31, 2023

Income	(All amounts in Rupees)	
	For the year ended March 31, 2023	For the year ended March 31, 2022
Income from grant of commercial rights, sponsorship and football assessment fee	1,19,46,95,854	58,47,65,627
Grants and aids received	7,38,19,298	10,50,73,496
Fees and levies	6,69,05,994	6,45,34,567
Other income	4,20,44,803	5,14,66,311
Total income	1,37,74,65,949	80,58,40,001

MONEY WITHOUT SWEAT & ACCOUNTABILITY

The **All India Football Federation (AIFF)** receives money from multiple sources, such as **FIFA, AFC, and the Government of India, without any pain or sweat.**

Public money. International development funds. Global football grants. Yet one basic question is never asked seriously:

What did you do with this money, and what is the result?

No performance audit. No outcome-based evaluation. No accountability linked to rankings, grassroots output, club development, or league strength. In any functioning system, funding is tied to outcomes. In Indian football, funding is tied to spending. No worries about the result.

AIFF also received money from **Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL)**, the promoters of the Indian Super League. This money was not for developing Indian football. It was, in effect, a **silence fee**. A price paid so that the federation would pretend to be Blind, Dumb & Deaf.



While the ISL systematically sidelined the **I-League**, the officially recognised top league of India at the time. ISL did not coexist with the I-League. **ISL decided the destiny of the I-League**. The I-League was weakened, de-marketed, de-valued, and eventually reduced to irrelevance. All AIFF watched in silence. ISL grew at the expense of the I-League, not alongside it. That growth was neither organic nor merit-based. It was administratively engineered.

But the ISL was never a sustainable project. Over time, it became a **financial burden** for FSDL. Losses mounted. The glamour phase ended.

So the promoters wanted to pass the weight onto the clubs, AIFF and the government. But AIFF, an expert in avoiding responsibility, was not ready to take the pain. It wanted **authority without accountability, power without cost, control without risk**.

That is the DNA of Indian football governance.

At one point, ISL clubs were ready to **run the league together**, as professional football clubs do across the world. The English Premier League is owned by 20 participating clubs. This should have been celebrated. Instead, AIFF refused permission, because of **fear**: Fear of independent clubs, Fear of competitive leagues and Fear of losing centralised control.

Elsewhere, clubs create associations, leagues, and governance models. In India, clubs act like slaves and always wait for AIFF's permission even to go to the washrooms.

Now comes the peak of the comedy. AIFF plans to **run the ISL itself**. What a national joke!!

Moreover, AIFF is forcing clubs to pay a huge affiliation fee. **Reliance**, the major shareholder of FSDL, is acquiring businesses. But why left the ISL? ISL is not making money. What about the financial stability of Indian football clubs? All are bleeding. Why is AIFF demanding huge fees from the bleeding and sinking clubs? **Why is AIFF not ready to share the revenue, profit or loss of the leagues with the clubs?** A decent deal.

We think none of the executive members of the AIFF owns or manages a professional club. That's why they don't know the pain of managing a football club. (Please

understand that **managing a professional football club is different from managing a paper club.**)

Again, regarding the plan of AIFF to run ISL. In football, even the greatest player cannot play alone. He needs ten teammates, opponents, referees, and rules. Football is the ultimate collective system.

Yet here, AIFF wants to be the organiser, the sanctioning authority, control the players' association and intimidate clubs. Tomorrow, they may even form teams such as **AIFF Blasters**, **AIFF Babus** and **AIFF Vultures** from among the AIFF general body members and play the ISL themselves.

This is not governance. This is **institutional schizophrenia**. A body that should regulate wants to compete. A referee wants to score goals. A sanctioning authority wants to own the league.

Globally, this is called a **conflict of interest**. In India, it is called sports administration.

This is why Indian football looks absurd to the world. India has talent and passionate fans. Indian football is in deep shit because governance lacks humility, courage, and clarity.

When administrators fear clubs, silence accountability, and confuse control with leadership, Indian football becomes **the Great Indian Football Comedy**.

And for a nation of India's stature, that **comedy is nothing short of a tragedy.**

THE TRAGEDY

- 1** India's top football league is facing a crisis
- 10+** Investments made by club owners are at serious risk
Home stadiums to lose revenue
- 100+** Hundreds of Indian footballers may lose their jobs and income
- 1000+** Thousands of sports professionals may lose their jobs and income
- 10,000+** Tens of thousands of businesses directly connected to football will suffer losses
- 1,00,000+** Lakhs of businesses indirectly dependent on football will be impacted
- 1,00,00,000+** Governments to lose crores of rupees in tax revenue

AIFF HAS NOTHING TO LOSE

- AIFF gets **FIFA grants** whether leagues succeed or fail
- AIFF gets **government funding**, whether players get payment or not
- AIFF officials **draw salaries** even if football stops

But,

- Clubs earn only **if matches happen**
- Players survive only **if clubs pay them**
- Coaches, referees, and staff **lose jobs the moment clubs collapse**

So when AIFF sabotages ISL or destabilises I-League, they lose nothing. But Indian football loses everything.

POTTY TRAINING FOR THE STAKEHOLDERS OF INDIAN FOOTBALL

Indian football is swimming in filth. When a child swims in dirt, it may look foolish or even amusing. But when an adult does the same, it is neither funny nor tolerable. It is painful to watch and harder to manage. Indian football is not a child. It has existed for more than a century. It has no excuse for swimming in filth.



Giving Potty Training to adults is a painful and shameful act. But we have to do it to save Indian football. If nothing is done, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) will bury it deeper in the filth through incompetence, control obsession, and fear of modern systems.

This book aims to train the stakeholders of Indian football in the basics of football as a business and football as an industry. Not advanced theory. Not innovation. Just the fundamentals.

This exercise is painful because we are trying to teach stubborn, powerful adults what children in Europe and Latin America know about football.

It's shameful to realize that Indian football is led by "big daddies" who do not know the A, B, C of football business, yet control its destiny.

Indian football is a unique and ugly form of football played by a group of **jerk administrators, aimless players, helpless club owners** and **bandwagon fans**. This is not a football culture. It is a distorted ecosystem held together by inertia and excuses. Training all these is a herculean task, but if we don't do it, we are doing an injustice to our great nation and generations ahead.

4

A, B, C OF FOOTBALL ECOSYSTEM

**“Our Karma determines what we
deserve and what we can
assimilate. We are responsible for
what we are; and whatever we
wish ourselves to be, we have the
power to make ourselves.”**

Swami Vivekananda

A | ANYONE AND EVERYONE CAN PLAY FOOTBALL, BUT NO ONE CAN OWN IT

Who owns football? **No one but everyone!!**

It was neither designed nor developed by a single person, institution, or nation. Football did not emerge from a boardroom or a patent office. Its present form is the result of thousands of years of evolution and the collective contribution of thousands of people across cultures, geographies, and eras.

Even the school that “11-a-side” football is sacred or final is a myth. It is simply the most widely accepted format today, not the only legitimate expression of the game.

Football Is Not Intellectual Property. Football is not patented. Football is not copyrighted. Even FIFA, the apex global body, does not own the word “football.”

In the United States and Canada, football refers to American Football. The world’s richest and most powerful sports league, the National Football League (NFL), does not play association football at all.

Ironically, in those same countries, FIFA itself uses the term “soccer” or “association football.”

This alone proves a critical point: **Football's identity is cultural, not proprietary.** No institution owns the game. Institutions only manage versions of it.

FOOTBALL AS A RELIGION, NOT A CORPORATION

Many people describe football as a religion. Consider Christianity. All Christians speak of Jesus Christ, yet Christianity has multiple branches, denominations, and churches. Catholicism and the Pope may be the most visible and globally recognised, but Protestant, Orthodox, and countless other churches continue to survive and grow, colliding and collaborating.

No single church owns Christ. Likewise, no single institution owns football.

FIFA may be the most powerful and visible authority, but football itself transcends FIFA, just as faith transcends any one religious institution.

Moreover, **modern football was born before FIFA. Clubs born before the Football Associations born.**

In its early days, football was played however people wished. Different towns, schools, and regions followed different rules. Some allowed handling the ball. Others didn't. Some tolerated violence; others discouraged it.

This freedom created passion, but also chaos. As the game spread, intellectuals within the football community

recognised the need for uniform rules, not to own the game, but to make it playable across regions. Rules were created not to centralise power, but to enable cooperation.

TIMELINE:

HOW FOOTBALL RULES WERE UNIFIED

1848 – The Cambridge Rules

Students at Cambridge University attempted to reconcile the various football rules used by English public schools, creating one of the earliest unified codes.

1857 – Sheffield FC Rules

Sheffield Football Club, the world's oldest association football club, was established and introduced its own rules, pioneering concepts such as Free kicks, Corner kicks and the crossbar

1863 – Formation of the Football Association (FA)

Representatives from 12 clubs met in London and drafted the first printed Laws of Football, formally separating association football from rugby-style games.

1877 – **Amalgamation of Sheffield and FA Rules**

Sheffield abandoned its independent rules to adopt FA laws, largely unifying football rules across England.

1882–1883 – **Home Nations Unification**

England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales agreed on a single rulebook for international matches.

1886 – **Formation of IFAB**

The **International Football Association Board (IFAB)** was created to maintain and amend the Laws of the Game, ensuring consistency while allowing evolution.

1904 – **Foundation of FIFA**

FIFA was established to organise international competitions, adopting IFAB's laws and expanding the game globally.

Crucially, **FIFA did not invent football. It inherited it.**

THE CORE LESSON FOR INDIAN FOOTBALL

Football was unified through consensus, not control. Through collaboration, not domination. Through clubs and players, not bureaucrats. This is the lesson Indian football refuses to learn.

Football does not belong to federations. Federations exist to serve football. When administrators behave like owners instead of caretakers, football stagnates. When they forget that football belongs to everyone, they strangle the very game they claim to protect.

Football survived centuries of chaos. It will not survive prolonged arrogance. That is the truth Indian football must confront.

B | BEAUTIFUL GAME, BUT A BAFFLING BUSINESS

Football is undeniably a beautiful game. You don't need to know any specific language to understand it, learn it, play it, or fall in love with it. A ball, a field, and a few players are enough to create magic.

By watching a handful of matches, anyone can become a self-proclaimed football expert. But the **football business is a different universe altogether**. It takes a lifetime to even begin understanding the football industry, because it is one of the most complex and baffling businesses in the world.

Football is not just a sport; it is an ecosystem of clubs, players, leagues, federations, broadcasters, sponsors, agents, fans, and governments, each with conflicting interests and unequal power.

PASSION IS NOT A BUSINESS STRATEGY

Passion alone has never built a sustainable football system. History proves this brutally. Many clubs with enormous fan bases have collapsed. Leagues with great players have disappeared. Nations with deep football culture have failed administratively.

Why? Because love for the game does not replace business competence. To succeed in the football business, one must possess:

- Strong business acumen
- Knowledge of sports management and law
- Understanding media
- Expertise in talent development
- Long-term strategic thinking

If you don't know sports management and the football business, the risk of failure will be too high.

Without sports management, passion becomes a liability rather than an asset.

WHERE INDIAN FOOTBALL GETS IT WRONG

Indian football is run almost entirely on emotion and privilege, not on business intelligence. **Administrators believe loving football qualifies them to govern it. Club owners believe funding teams makes them football visionaries. Fans believe noise equals knowledge.** None of this is true.

Football remains beautiful because of its simplicity on the pitch. Football becomes dangerous when its complexity off the pitch is ignored. Those who confuse passion with expertise end up damaging the very game they claim to love.

If Indian football is to survive and grow, it must first accept this uncomfortable truth: **The beautiful game demands a ruthless respect for business.**

TRAPPED IN THE PASSION SCHOOL

A large section of Indian footballers, fans, and even the sports media still live in what can be called the “**Passion School.**” In this mindset, football is seen purely as emotion and romance, and any discussion of commercialisation is treated as a betrayal of the game. This is a fundamental misunderstanding.

Footballers earn high salaries because football is a business. Fans enjoy high-quality matches because investors put money into clubs, leagues, infrastructure, and talent. Great players, great stadiums, great broadcasts, and great experiences are all products of sustained financial investment.

Romanticism does not pay wages. Business does.

Money Is Not the Enemy, but Ignorance Is. Profit-making is not a crime. Let us be clear:

No footballer plays for free. No coach trains for free. No referee officiates for free. No journalist reports without a salary. **Everyone in football needs money. Investors are no exception.** And investors will stay only if football is run as a credible, transparent, and profitable business.

When football business succeeds, clubs grow, academies improve, infrastructure develops, and talent is retained.

Only financially viable clubs can dream of signing global icons, whether that's Messi, Ronaldo, or the next superstar. Without financial health, clubs do not sign legends; they blow the final whistle on their own existence.

INDIAN REALITY: BUSINESS GIANTS HAVE FAILED

Indian football offers a harsh warning. Top business houses like **Mahindra** and **JCT Phagwara** entered football with resources, intent, and reputation, yet failed to sustain themselves in the football business.

This gives a powerful message: **The football business is not an ordinary business. It is complex, risky, and unforgiving.**

Blind passion without professional knowledge of sports management destroys even the strongest balance sheets.

Instead of **club-driven football** (as in Europe, Japan, or South America), Indian football is **association-driven**. Decisions flow top-down, not bottom-up. Leagues are created, paused, merged, or endangered not by sporting logic but by administrative power struggles.

Clubs, the lifeblood of football, are treated as dependents rather than stakeholders. Clubs don't have the freedom to do their business. Traditional clubs that once carried regional identity and fan loyalty are marginalised, while new franchises operate without roots, continuity, or accountability.

FOOTBALL WILL SURVIVE, INDIAN FOOTBALL MAY NOT

Even if the Indian football industry collapses and Indian clubs stop their business, football itself will survive. Children will still play in the streets and school grounds. People will still watch the World Cup and European leagues. Fans will still erect the big hoardings of Messi and Ronaldo and enjoy the appreciation of FIFA. Indian football fans will celebrate world cup by waving the flags of foreign countries.

But this is not football growth. This is **football slavery**.

DANGER OF FOOTBALL SLAVERY

Once, India lived under political slavery. Our ancestors sacrificed their lives for freedom and self-respect. Today, there is a new danger, not political, but cultural and sporting: Football slavery.

When a nation consumes football but cannot produce it, when fans worship foreign clubs but abandon local ones, when passion exists without ownership, industry, or dignity, that nation becomes a football colony. Foreigners sell their football in India.

Now, European clubs and leagues have a strong market in India due to our 'no football' condition. If India has a strong football ecosystem, Indians will not follow European clubs and leagues.

Football deserves love. But love without ownership is surrender. If India truly loves football, it must stop romanticising and start building power that is economic, institutional, and cultural power within the game.

Otherwise, **passion will remain. Indian football will not.**



C | COOPERATION AND COMPETITION

“In business, if you don’t have competition, you are a hero. In the sports business, if you don’t have competition, you are a zero.”

This single statement captures the core logic of the football business. In conventional businesses, monopolies are celebrated. In sports, monopolies are destructive. A club without opponents has no matches, no audience, no relevance and therefore no value.

Competition Laws or **Antitrust Laws** are enacted in different countries to ensure fair market competition, protect consumers, and promote economic development by controlling anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominance, and anticompetitive mergers.

COMPETITION IS THE ENGINE

The football business survives and grows through **competition**. A club’s economic life depends on **the number of matches it plays, the quality of opponents it faces** and **the uncertainty of results**.

More matches mean: **More ticket sales, More broadcast hours, More sponsorship exposure and More fan engagement.**

But matches cannot exist in isolation. **You need opponents. And you need many of them.**

That is why **leagues become the backbone of football economics.**

YOUR VALUE RISES WITH YOUR OPPONENT'S VALUE

In football, a club's value is **directly proportional** to the value of its opponents.

For example, if a relatively unknown local Indian club plays against **Manchester United**, the Indian club's name instantly reaches hundreds of millions of Manchester United fans worldwide. Media attention multiplies. Brand value rises overnight.

The opponent lends credibility, visibility, and relevance.

This is why small clubs dream of cup competitions. This is why **promotion–relegation** matters. This is why competitive balance is essential.

COOPERATION MAKES COMPETITION POSSIBLE

Paradoxically, competition in football exists only through **cooperation**.

Clubs must cooperate to:

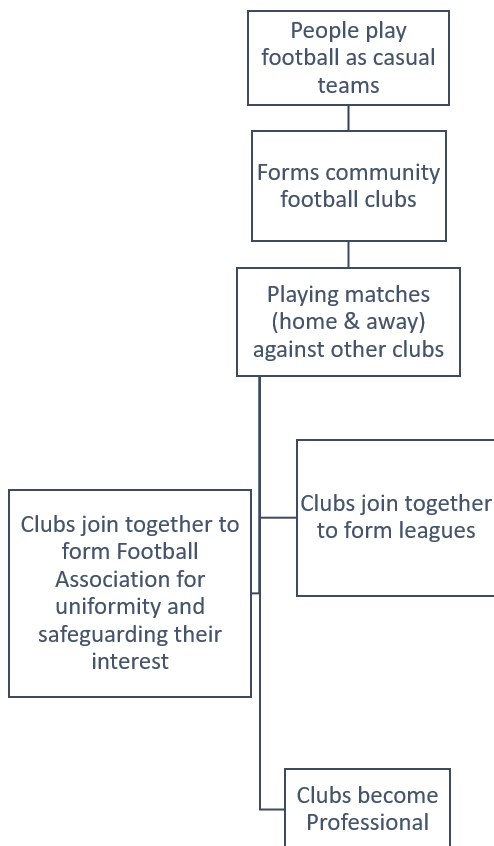
- Form leagues
- Share calendars
- Pool media rights
- Grow together

The world's first football league, originally called **the Football League** (now the EFL), was started by **12 clubs** in **1888**.

While the Football Association (The FA) had existed since 1863 to set the rules of the game, there was no organised league until **William McGregor**, a director at Aston Villa FC, proposed a formal schedule of home-and-away matches to ensure clubs had guaranteed fixtures and steady income.

The **Premier League** was formed in **1992** when the clubs in the Football League (EFL) decided to break away from the Football League. This was a seismic shift in English football, driven by money, television, and a desire for global dominance. The **Premier League is a private company owned by its 20 member clubs, with The FA holding a special share**.

The following chart shows the natural evolution of the football ecosystem through cooperation and competition.



Without cooperation, competition collapses. Without competition, the football business dies.

This delicate balance of cooperating off the pitch to compete fiercely on it is what Indian football has failed to understand.

THE INDIAN LESSON

When administrators fear competition and control entry, opponents, and outcomes, they shrink the market instead of growing it. When leagues are closed, matches are limited. When matches are limited, value disappears.

Football does not grow by protecting a few clubs. It grows by creating **many strong opponents**.

The football business is not about eliminating rivals. It is about **creating worthy ones**.

Indian clubs, players, fans, and the nation will begin to see the real value of football on and off the pitch only when Indian football embraces both cooperation and competition.

5

SHORTCUTS TO SAVE INDIAN FOOTBALL

**“The greatest sin is to think that
you are weak.”**

Swami Vivekananda

“When Will India Qualify for the Football World Cup—and How?”

When we asked this question to our students, some of them came up with *brilliant shortcuts* that our present football administrators would secretly admire.

These shortcuts perfectly capture the Indian football mindset: **Avoid the hard work, manipulate the system, and hope for miracles.**

The best of these “solutions” are listed below.

THE SHORTCUT MANUAL TO WORLD CUP QUALIFICATION



Make 'future Indian footballers' with the sperm of world's top footballers



India has to change its Citizenship rules

Convince FIFA to host a World Cup where **every member nation** automatically qualifies



India hosts the World Cup

Bribe the Asian Football Confederation and its members to help India



Argentina 1978: 16
Spain 1982: 24
Mexico 1986: 24
Italy 1990: 24
USA 1994: 24
France 1998: 32
Korea/Japan 2002: 32
Germany 2006: 32
South Africa 2010: 32
Brazil 2014: 32
Russia 2018: 32
Qatar 2022: 32
Next: 211

1. CONVINCE FIFA TO LET EVERYONE QUALIFY

Why struggle through qualifiers when FIFA can simply organise a World Cup where **every member nation automatically qualifies**?

FIFA loves money. More teams mean more matches, more sponsors, more broadcasters, more revenue. This is the easiest route for India: No pain, no sweat, no grassroots and no long-term planning.

Just show up and wave the flag.



2. HOST THE WORLD CUP—BUY YOUR WAY IN

As hosts, nations automatically qualify. So why not India?

Yes, it's expensive. But instead of dreaming about hosting the Olympics, India can directly aim for the **Football**

World Cup. Stadiums, infrastructure, billions of dollars, a small price to pay to avoid football reform.



3. BRIBE THE AFC AND ITS MEMBERS

Football politics exists. Why pretend it doesn't? India can simply donate generously to the AFC, bribe influential member associations, and request "friendly" qualifying results. We know it, '**Match Fixing**'.

Winning qualifiers without actually being the better team is efficient, painless, and perfectly aligned with shortcut culture.

4. IMPORT A NATIONAL TEAM

Why develop players when you can **import them**?

Simplify Indian citizenship laws. Offer passports and massive salaries to top foreign players. Field a national team full of "new Indians."

India qualifies with a squad that has never played Indian football, understands no local culture, and has zero grassroots connection.

Problem solved.

5. Manufacture Footballers in a Laboratory

Why wait 20 years for player development?

Science has solutions. Elite football performance is linked to genetics... muscle fibre types (ACTN3), oxygen efficiency (ACE gene), recovery traits, and physical build. Some studies suggest population-level differences in muscle mass and sprint potential.

So why not:

- Collect sperm from the world's top footballers
- Create genetically superior "future Indian footballers"
- Build a superhuman national team in a lab

This is long-term planning in AI style. (AI is not Artificial Intelligence, but Artificial Insemination)



NONSENSE TO MAKE SENSE

All these ideas are ridiculous. Real qualification requires:

- Strong clubs
- Competitive leagues
- Youth development
- Coaching education
- Institutional reform
- Accountability

That path has no shortcuts. And that is exactly why Indian football avoids it.

THE REAL QUESTION

The real question is not *"When will India qualify for the World Cup?"*

The real question is:

When will India be ready to struggle and suffer honestly for football success instead of chasing shortcuts?

Until then, satire will sound more realistic than strategy and that itself is the biggest joke in Indian football.

6

THE MISSING FOUNDATION OF INDIAN FOOTBALL

**If you don't know or value your rights, you will be a slave soon.
If you don't know or value others' rights, you will be hopeless.**

**"Freedom is never to be reached by
the weak. Throw away all
weakness. Tell your body that it is
strong, tell your mind that it is
strong, and have unbounded faith
and hope in yourself."**

Swami Vivekananda

We concluded the last session with a crucial question:
When will India be ready to struggle and suffer honestly for football success instead of chasing shortcuts?

India will be ready only when the **stakeholders of Indian football learn, understand, and respect their rights and responsibilities**. This session is dedicated to that purpose.

The most important truth here is simple but uncomfortable: **Every right comes with a responsibility**. Without accepting it, football reform is impossible.

THE REAL MASTERS OF FOOTBALL

In a healthy football ecosystem, three stakeholders are supreme:

1. **Clubs**
2. **Players**
3. **Fans**

If we remove even one, the ecosystem will collapse.

Ironically, in India, **none of these three understands their true power or importance**. Instead, they have surrendered control to administrators who neither create football nor take risks for it.

THE REAL MASTERS OF FOOTBALL

In a healthy football ecosystem,
three stakeholders are supreme:

1 CLUBS



2 PLAYERS



3 FANS



CLUBS AND INVESTORS: THE MOST MISUNDERSTOOD STAKEHOLDERS

We once popularised the slogan: **“Football is nothing without fans.”** This is globally true, but **not in India**. So let us restate a more fundamental truth:

Football is nothing without clubs.

Clubs

- Create matches
- Provide opportunities to players
- Employ coaches and sports professionals
- Generate economic activity
- Pay taxes
- Sustain leagues

Globally, many legendary clubs were founded by football lovers, not bureaucrats. Some of the world’s greatest clubs are **fan-owned and fan-managed**. Eg: Real Madrid, FC Barcelona & Bayern Munich.

THE KERALA PARADOX: PASSION WITHOUT CLUBS

Kerala is celebrated worldwide for its football passion. Even FIFA has acknowledged Kerala’s fan culture. Yet Kerala does not have a truly **independent, fully professional football club**. Kerala Blasters and Gokulam

FC function more like **semi-professional clubs**. This is both a **comedy and a tragedy**: Unmatched passion, but no club ownership culture.

RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE PROFITS

Professional football clubs are **business entities**, not charities. They have the **right** to earn revenue and the **responsibility** to make profits. Profit is not evil. Profit is what fuels:

- Growth
- Infrastructure
- Youth development
- Better salaries
- Sustainability

A charity-driven club dies when philanthropists die. A profit-driven club survives generations.

RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY TO COOPERATE AND COMPETE

Football economics depends on a paradox:

- **Clubs cooperate off the pitch**
- **Clubs compete fiercely on the pitch**

Clubs cooperate to form leagues, share benefits and grow together. They compete to win matches, increase brand value and attract fans and sponsors.

Italian professional clubs and arch-rivals **AC Milan** and **Inter Milan** share the San Siro stadium primarily for financial and logistical reasons, stemming from a 1947 proposal by Inter when they needed a larger venue, with the Milan City Council owning the ground, making it a cost-effective solution for both clubs to share maintenance and operating expenses rather than building separate stadiums.

"We have always had a good relationship with Inter, so it makes sense to continue sharing the new stadium and split the costs of building and running it," says Milan chairman Paolo Scaroni. That's the cooperation!!

During off-seasons, clubs even cooperate for **friendly matches**... purely to earn more money.

LEAGUES: BACKBONE OF FOOTBALL BUSINESS

Leagues guarantee:

- Regular matches
- Predictable calendars
- Ticket revenue
- Broadcasting revenue

More matches = more value.

High performance combined with high match volume leads to **sponsorship growth, merchandise sales and licensing income**. Without leagues, clubs suffocate.

INDIAN CLUBS AND THE RIGHT TO SELF-ORGANISE

ISL & I-League clubs have:

- The **right** to cooperate
- The **right** to operate ISL independently
- The **right** to form a new league if required

If AIFF refuses sanction, clubs have **legal remedies** such as courts, competition law and an independent organisation.

Clubs exist to play matches and earn money. No one funds clubs just for existing.

DO NOT FEAR THE COURTS

Clubs should not fear litigation. Globally, monopoly in sports governance has been **legally challenged and defeated several times**.

European Super League (ESL) Case

When UEFA and FIFA threatened bans, ESL promoters went to court. The **European Court of Justice (December 2023)** ruled that FIFA and

UEFA acted unlawfully and violated competition law. Spanish courts ordered FIFA and UEFA to stop opposing the ESL.

These judgments shattered the myth that federations have absolute control.

The Kerry Packer Revolution: Lessons from Cricket

Kerry Packer transformed cricket forever. The Australian Cricket Board rejected his TV rights offer. Packer created **World Series Cricket (WSC)**. Signed top players secretly. Ran a breakaway league.

Though WSC lasted only two seasons, its impact was permanent: Players became professionals and celebrities. Salaries increased globally. One-Day cricket became commercial gold. The path was paved for T20 and IPL.

Revolutions are always resisted until they win. Great cricketers like Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli must thank Kerry Packer for paving the way for be rich. Otherwise, they would have worked in government departments under the sports quota for their livelihood. The funny part is that no cricketer from India played WSC!

RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY TO DELIVER THE BEST

Clubs have the right and duty to grow.

When clubs grow, **players get better salaries, fans get better matches, coaches and staff get better careers, and football quality improves.**

But growth requires **the maximum number of matches, Competitive leagues and aggressive commercial strategy.**

A club that sits idle without matches will never grow.
Lakshmi Devi does not bless the idle.

FROM SUBJECTS TO STAKEHOLDERS

Indian football will change only when:

- Clubs stop begging and start asserting
- Fans stop worshipping and start owning
- Players stop adjusting and start demanding

Rights without responsibility create chaos.
Responsibility without rights creates slavery.

Indian football needs neither.

It needs **informed, courageous stakeholders** willing to fight for the best and to be the best. Only then will India be ready to suffer honestly for football success.

RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY TO CREATE GREAT FOOTBALLERS

Clubs Create Footballers. Not Governing Bodies.

Great footballers are not manufactured in boardrooms or administrative offices. They are created on training grounds, in academies, and through competitive matches by **football clubs**.

Clubs **identify talent, nurture it, develop it, and protect it**. They provide the **best coaching, maximum playing opportunities, sports science, medical care, and financial security**. They turn young players into professionals and professionals into **icons**.

Only *after* this long process do national football bodies step in to **use these club-made players** to compete in international tournaments like the World Cup.

LIONEL MESSI: A CLUB-MADE FOOTBALLER

Lionel Messi did not come from a football association system. He came from **clubs**.

- At **age 4**, Messi joined his local club **Grandoli**
- At **7**, he began playing for **Newell's Old Boys**
- At **10**, his career was nearly over when he was diagnosed with **growth hormone deficiency**.

The treatment cost was enormous and Newell's initially agreed to help, then backed out. He was scouted by **River**

Plate, who wanted to sign him and even offered to pay for his treatment. But Newell's refused to release his player card, blocking the transfer.

With no future in Argentina, the Messi family looked abroad. In **September 2000**, FC **Barcelona** invited him for a trial. First-team director **Carles Rexach** immediately saw his genius. On **14 December 2000**, with no formal document available, he **offered Messi a contract on a paper napkin**, committing the club to his development and medical treatment.

The rest is history.

THE TRUTH FOOTBALL MUST ACCEPT

Lionel Messi was **created by football clubs**, not football associations. Just like **Maradona, Ronaldo, Cruyff, Xavi, Iniesta, Neymar, Mbappé** and every great footballer in history.

Football associations **select teams**. Football clubs **create players**. If a country wants to succeed in football, the solution is not more committees, rules, or slogans. The solution is **strong clubs, deep leagues, youth academies**, and **financially secure football ecosystems**.

No strong clubs = No great national team

That is the real lesson from Messi's story and from world football itself.

FANS:

THE ULTIMATE BOSSES OF FOOTBALL BUSINESS

In football, **fans are the real bosses.**

They are the only stakeholders who consistently pay from their own pockets—not for profit, but for emotion, identity, and belonging. Fans buy tickets, jerseys, subscriptions, travel to stadiums, and spend time and energy following the game. Without fans, football collapses into a training exercise.

Football exists because fans choose to care.

RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY TO ENJOY GREAT SPORTING MOMENTS

Fans have the **right** to enjoy great sporting moments. That is why football is played in stadiums, not behind closed doors. That is why home and away leagues attract spectators than single-venue tournaments.

But this right also comes with responsibility.

Imagine a great match played in front of empty stands. The energy is dead. The players feel it. The spectacle loses meaning. Even television viewers sense the absence.

This reality forced **Sunil Chhetri**, the former Indian captain, to publicly plead with fans to come to stadiums

and support the national team. That moment was painful, but revealing.

"Please come and support us, encourage us, watch us, abuse us, criticise us. Football in India needs you. To all of you, who have lost hope or don't have any hope in Indian football, we request you to come and watch us in the stadium."

The presence of fans, both supporting and opposing, **creates fury, tension, and drama**. Rival chants, cheers, and pressure elevate ordinary matches into unforgettable experiences.

Fans do not just watch football. They **complete** it.

RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY TO FOLLOW LEGENDS AND LEGACIES

Legends are not created by goals alone. **Fans create legends.**

A player becomes legendary when fans:

- Remember their moments
- Tell their stories
- Sing their names
- Pass their memories to the next generation

Without fans, even the greatest careers fade into statistics.

Clubs become legacies not because of trophies, but because fans protect their history. They remember fallen heroes, celebrate anniversaries, defend identities, and resist erasure.

When Indian fans abandon local clubs to blindly worship foreign stars, we unknowingly destroy the possibility of creating **Indian legends**.

You cannot import legacy. You must build it, and fans are the builders.

RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY TO BE PART OF CLUBS

Fans are not just customers. They are **stakeholders**.

Across the world, fans participate directly in club governance through:

- **Fan-owned clubs** (e.g., FC Barcelona, Real Madrid, Bayern Munich)
- **Supporters' trusts** (common in England and Germany)
- Fan representation on boards
- Voting rights on key decisions

Fans saved many football clubs from extinction. When football institutions fail through mismanagement, greed, or governance collapse, it is often fans who step in as the final line of defence. Across countries and leagues, supporters have repeatedly proven that football survives

not because of owners or federations, but because of communities.

1. Fundraising: Fans as Financial Lifelines

In moments of acute crisis, supporters frequently mobilise faster than institutions. When **Wigan Athletic** faced financial collapse in 2020, supporters raised over £500,000, not for profit, but to preserve their club's existence. These efforts reflect a simple truth: for fans, football clubs are not assets; they are heritage.

2. Community and Supporter Ownership

Beyond emergency funding, fans have created sustainable ownership models to prevent future crises. Supporter trusts and community ownership structures, typically based on 'one member, one vote', prioritise long-term stability, transparency, and local accountability over short-term speculation.

AFC Wimbledon stands as the gold standard. After their original club was relocated, fans rebuilt from scratch. Today, the Dons Trust retains majority ownership, ensuring democratic control.

Exeter City and **Bath City** are further examples where fan ownership rescued clubs from financial ruin and secured their future.

These models redefine governance: **clubs exist for communities, not investors alone.**

3. “Phoenix” Clubs: Rebirth After Collapse

When existing structures become irredeemable, fans have gone even further by creating entirely new clubs to preserve identity, history, and belonging.

After Bury FC was expelled from the English Football League in 2019, supporters founded **Bury AFC**, a “phoenix club” that restarted from the lower leagues. Though stripped of assets and status, the club’s soul survived.

Phoenix clubs demonstrate the ultimate truth of football: Stadiums can be sold, licenses can be revoked, but community cannot be liquidated.

Fans save clubs not because it is profitable, but because football is a social infrastructure. It binds cities, generations, and identities. When governance systems fail, fans do not walk away; they rebuild.

Any football reform agenda that ignores supporters is structurally flawed. Any federation that treats fans as spectators rather than stakeholders risks irrelevance.
Football survives because fans refuse to let it die.

These models protect clubs from reckless owners, preserve community identity, and ensure long-term sustainability.

When fans have ownership, they demand **transparency, accountability and sporting integrity**

In India, fans behave like spectators, not owners. They cheer passionately but walk away silently when the clubs and leagues collapse. This must change.

FROM CROWD TO CUSTODIAN

Fans must evolve from noise-makers to **custodians of football**. Football does not belong to federations. Football does not belong to administrators.

Football belongs to the fans, **only if fans are brave enough to claim it.**

“If you don’t learn to beat the blocks by playing football, then you never played football.”

PLAYERS:

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE CORE OF FOOTBALL

Players are the **visible face of football**. Stadiums fill because of them. Broadcast deals exist because of them. Fans fall in love with football through their moments of brilliance. Yet in Indian football, players are often treated as replaceable labour rather than as **central stakeholders**.

Players must understand their value. They are the crowdpullers. Fans pay to watch the game of their favourite players, not the game of sports administrators.

RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY TO PLAY MAXIMUM MATCHES

Players have the right to **play football**, not sit idle. A footballer's career is short, 10 to 15 years at best. Every missed season, cancelled league, or suspended tournament permanently damages a player's growth, income, confidence, and market value.

In global football, players compete in leagues and continental and international tournaments. This system is designed to **maximise playing opportunities**.

Indian athletes are the most helpless athletes in the world. The following picture will explain it.

 smri.in    playsmri LIFE OF ATHLETE WHY ATHLETES NEED SPECIAL SUPPORT? 			
Athletes start young and retire early, with a short career span to earn most of their lifetime income. To play and earn maximum, they need strong support from experts in sports management, sports engineering, and sports science.			
SKILLED / UNSKILLED WORKERS	GOVERNMENT / PRIVATE EMPLOYEES	PROFESSIONALS	ATHLETES
CAREER BEGINNING			
After 18 years	After 18 years	After 18 years	Before 15 years
COMPENSATION			
Inconsistent & unsecured	Consistent & secured	Consistent & secured	Inconsistent & unsecured
PERFORMANCE BASED CAREER RISK			
Low-Medium	Nil- Medium	Medium- High	Very High
RETIREMENT AGE			
No retirement	55 to 65	No retirement	Around 35-40
CAREER SPAN			
Duration (30+ years)	Long (30+ years)	Very long (50+ years)	Short (Below 20 years)
POST RETIREMENT INCOME			
NIL	Pension	Pension + New assignments	NIL
PRACTICE & PREPARATION			
Nothing/Limited & One time	Limited	High and continuous learning	Very high and daily practice

With the right to play comes the responsibility to: maintain fitness year-round, be match-ready at all times, and refuse systems that reduce football to training camps

Players must understand: **No matches = no value.**

If players silently accept fewer matches, they participate in their own professional decline.

RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY TO WIN AND EXCEL

Football is not a recreational activity at the professional level. It is elite competition. Every player has the right to challenge himself against stronger opponents, better leagues, and higher standards.

Meaningless matches, fixed outcomes, or administrative manipulation insult a player's dignity.

Excellence is not gifted. It is earned. Players have the responsibility to win. Winning is not just about trophies; it is about **raising standards**. When players accept mediocrity, leagues decay.

A football culture improves only when players demand better from themselves first.

RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY TO FORTUNE AND FAME

There is nothing immoral about wanting money, recognition and stardom

Football is one of the most demanding professions in the world. It consumes youth, health, privacy, and emotional stability. Players have every right to seek financial security and public recognition.

Global icons earn fortunes not by luck, but because football is a business and players are its primary assets. Aspiring to become rich and famous through football is not arrogance. It is an ambition. **Messi and Ronaldo have long, successful careers because they are ambitious and committed to themselves.**

Fortune and fame come with obligations.

Players must:

- Protect the image of the game
- Behave as role models
- Respect fans and institutions
- Manage finances wisely
- Plan life beyond football

Fame is temporary. Careers end early. A responsible player prepares for life after the final whistle.

Moreover, players must understand their **collective power**. Through players' unions and associations, they can:

- Demand fair wages
- Secure contracts
- Ensure insurance and welfare
- Protect careers

Silence and obedience do not bring security; teamwork does.

Playing well on the field is not enough today to succeed, but knowing about off the field and being ready to play off the field.

FROM EMPLOYEES TO PROFESSIONALS

Players are not beneficiaries of football. They are **contributors and creators**. Indian football will rise not when administrators change, but when **players realise their power, dignity, and responsibility**.

Football rewards courage. Silence is never rewarded.

THE PATH TO PROFESSIONALISM

From Elite Pastime to Working-Class Game

In the mid-19th century, football underwent a profound social transformation. What began as a recreational activity of Britain's educated elite, played in public schools and universities, rapidly spread to the industrial towns of the North and Midlands. Factory workers, dock labourers, and miners embraced the game, turning football into a mass spectator sport.

This social shift fundamentally altered football's economics. Matches began attracting thousands of paying spectators, and success on the pitch became directly linked to gate receipts. Football was no longer just a gentleman's pastime; it was becoming a livelihood.

“Shamateurism” and the Hypocrisy of Amateurism

Despite this reality, the **Football Association (FA)** rigidly enforced amateur rules. Officially, players were forbidden from receiving payment. In practice, however, many northern clubs secretly compensated their best players to retain talent and remain competitive.

This contradiction became known as **“shamateurism.”** Clubs publicly professed amateur ideals while privately paying wages under the table. Scottish players, often referred to as the ‘Scotch Professors’, migrated south, bringing superior tactical understanding and professionalism, further exposing the farce of amateur purity.

The FA’s insistence on amateurism increasingly served not sporting integrity, but **class privilege**, protecting southern, elite-dominated clubs from working-class competition.

FA Cup Shock: The Working Class Takes Over

The illusion finally cracked in the early 1880s.

- In **1882**, Blackburn Rovers became the first working-class club to reach the FA Cup final.
- In **1883**, Blackburn Olympic became the first working-class team to win the FA Cup, defeating the Old Etonians.

This victory was seismic. It marked the decline of amateur-dominated southern teams and proved that to compete at the highest level, clubs needed **paid, trained, and committed players**. Amateurism was no longer compatible with elite performance.

Crisis of 1884: Threat of a Breakaway

Tensions reached a breaking point in **1884**, when the FA expelled two clubs for fielding professional players. The punishment was severe, but the response was stronger.

Northern clubs openly threatened to form a rival governing body, a “**British Football Association**,” which would legitimise professionalism and reflect the realities of the modern game. For the first time, the FA faced an existential challenge to its authority.

This was a familiar pattern in sports history: when governance fails to adapt, **breakaway movements emerge**.

Legalisation of Professionalism (1885)

Faced with the risk of schism, the FA convened a special general meeting. In **July 1885**, it reluctantly voted to legalise professionalism.

The decision came with constraints such as a rule requiring professional players to live within a six-mile radius of their club’s ground, an attempt to preserve “local identity” and limit player mobility. Yet the principle had been conceded.

Footballers were now officially recognised as **workers**, not just hobbyists.

Birth of the Football League

Legalised professionalism immediately exposed another structural problem: the FA Cup's knockout format offered no financial stability. Clubs needed **guaranteed fixtures** to generate predictable income and meet wage obligations.

In response, Aston Villa director **William McGregor** proposed a revolutionary idea: a league competition with home-and-away matches on a fixed schedule.

- In **1888**, the **Football League** was formed with 12 professional clubs, primarily from the North and Midlands.
- **Preston North End** became the first champions, completing the inaugural season unbeaten in both the league and the FA Cup.

This was the world's first professional football league.

Legacy: The Blueprint for Modern Sport

The transition from amateurism to professionalism in English football did not happen smoothly or peacefully. It was driven by:

- Social change
- Economic reality
- Player exploitation
- Institutional resistance
- And the constant threat of breakaway action

Yet this struggle created the model that professional sports worldwide would follow: **Paid athletes, structured leagues, predictable revenue, and regulated competition.**

Football's global, commercialised form today exists not because governing bodies were benevolent, but because clubs and players **forced institutions to adapt or become irrelevant.**

History is clear: **Professional sport is not gifted from above. It is wrestled from below.**

Once, the legendary Indian footballer **Baichung Bhutia** said

India has missed out on hundreds of Messis.

Why? Everyone knows the answer. But what do we do to create super champions like Messi or Ronaldo in India? Unfortunately, nothing!!

ALLIED SPORTS PROFESSIONALS: THE INVISIBLE PILLARS OF FOOTBALL

Football is not played by players alone. Behind every 90-minute performance stands an **ecosystem of allied sports professionals** whose work decides whether players survive injuries, clubs grow sustainably, and performance peaks or collapses.

These professionals include:

- Sports Management Professionals
- Coaches and assistant coaches
- Strength & conditioning experts
- Physiotherapists and sports doctors
- Sports scientists and Sports Analysts
- Sports Engineers
- Many others

Without them, football will go back to the 18th century.

RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY TO SUPPORT CLUBS AND PLAYERS

Allied professionals have the right to:

- Work in a respectful, professional environment
- Receive fair compensation
- Be part of long-term sporting projects
- Contribute to decision-making

They are not helpers or subordinates; they are **specialists**. Modern football is a science-driven industry, and ignoring expert voices leads to injuries, poor performance, and wasted talent.

Support is not blind loyalty.
It is a **professional commitment**.

Allied professionals must:

- Prioritise player welfare over short-term results
- Protect careers, not just match outcomes
- Educate players continuously
- Act ethically even under pressure

Their duty is to **extend careers, enhance performance, and reduce damage**, not to please administrators or rush injured players back onto the field.

RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY TO DO THEIR JOBS PROFESSIONALLY

Allied professionals have the right to:

- Autonomy within their domain
- Proper infrastructure and resources
- Data access and tools
- Clear roles and accountability

Micromanagement by non-experts kills performance. When administrators or former players interfere without knowledge, professionalism dies.

Professionalism is non-negotiable. Allied professionals must:

- Stay updated with global best practices
- Use evidence-based methods
- Avoid shortcuts, superstition, and outdated ideas
- Maintain transparency and documentation
- Respect confidentiality and ethics

A poorly trained physio or unqualified coach can destroy a player's career faster than any opponent.

RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY TO GROW AND EXCEL

Allied professionals have the right to:

- Career progression
- International exposure
- Continuous education
- Recognition for success

In world football, clubs invest heavily in staff development because **elite backroom teams create elite teams.**

Growth requires effort. Allied professionals must:

- Invest in certifications and learning
- Embrace technology and analytics
- Collaborate across disciplines
- Measure impact and outcomes

If players are expected to improve every season, the same applies to those who train, heal, and prepare them.

Stagnant knowledge creates stagnant football.

PROFESSIONALS WHO SHAPE THE FUTURE

Allied sports professionals are not background workers. They are **career-makers and career-savers**. Indian football will not progress through slogans or administrators alone. It will rise when **qualified professionals are trusted, empowered, and held accountable**.

Football is a team sport, not only on the pitch, but **behind it** as well.

GOVERNING BODIES:

CUSTODIANS, NOT OWNERS OF FOOTBALL

Football does not belong to governing bodies. Governing bodies exist **because football exists**. Their legitimacy comes only from their ability to **serve, regulate, and protect** the football ecosystem. They are not to dominate or exploit it.

Governing bodies (AIFF, state associations, FIFA) are **custodians**, not masters.

RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY TO PROMOTE FOOTBALL

Governing bodies have the right to:

- Organise competitions and calendars
- Frame rules and regulations
- Represent the sport nationally and internationally

These rights exist so that football can grow **in scale, quality, and reach**.

Governing bodies must:

- Maximise the number of matches at all levels
- Encourage the formation and sustainability of clubs
- Create open, competitive league pyramids

- Invest in grassroots, youth, women's, and amateur football
- Support coach education and referee development

A governing body that **reduces matches, blocks leagues, or kills clubs** is failing in its primary responsibility. **If football activity declines, the governing body has no moral right to exist.**

RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT FOOTBALL

Governing bodies have the right to:

- Regulate competitions
- Enforce sporting integrity
- Prevent match-fixing, corruption, and doping
- Ensure safety and minimum standards

These powers are meant to **protect the game**, not to protect their positions.

Protection means safeguarding **sporting fairness, player welfare, investor interests and long-term ecosystem health.**

Governing bodies must:

- Prevent financial mismanagement and exploitation
- Ensure transparent licensing systems

- Stop political interference and conflicts of interest
- Avoid monopoly behaviour that restricts growth

When governing bodies protect **themselves instead of football**, they become parasites, not protectors.

RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Football survives because of **clubs, players, fans, investors, media, and professionals**.

Governing bodies have the right to:

- Coordinate among stakeholders
- Mediate disputes
- Create regulatory frameworks

But coordination is not control.

They must act as **neutral referees**, not dictators.
Governing bodies must:

- Protect clubs' right to conduct business
- Protect players' right to employment and mobility
- Protect fans' right to access football and transparency
- Protect investors' right to fair competition
- Protect media freedom and commercial innovation

Blocking leagues, discouraging private investment, or punishing innovation is **anti-football**.

MONOPOLY VS GOVERNANCE

A governing body becomes dangerous when it:

- Treats football as its private property
- Suppresses competition
- Uses threats instead of dialogue
- Punishes reformers

History shows that **football grows through competition, not control. Monopolies delay progress; competition accelerates it.**

GOVERNANCE WITH HUMILITY OR IRRELEVANCE

If governing bodies fail to reform, football will find another path with or without them. That is not rebellion. That is **evolution**.

MEDIA:

THE MOST POWERFUL INVISIBLE STAKEHOLDER IN FOOTBALL

The media does not play football. The media does not own clubs. But the media **decides what people see, remember, celebrate, and forget.**

In modern football, the media is not a messenger; it is a **multiplier of value, influence, and history.**

RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT FOOTBALL

Media has the right to:

- Cover matches, players, clubs, and leagues
- Question administrators and institutions
- Profit from broadcasting, content, and advertising
- Shape public narratives

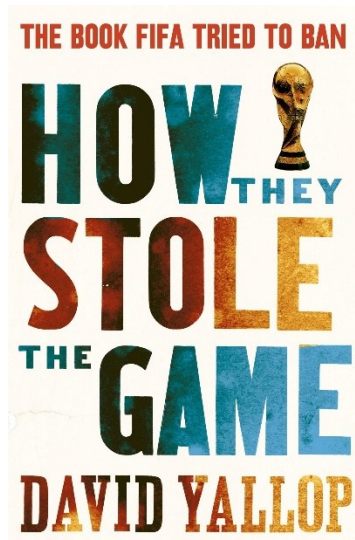
This right exists because the media is essential to football's visibility and survival. Promotion is not blind praise. Media must:

- Give consistent coverage to domestic leagues and grassroots football
- Highlight governance failures, corruption, and inefficiency

- Ask uncomfortable questions to federations and league operators
- Protect the game from administrative decay

Silence is complicity and compromise.

When the media ignores dying clubs, shrinking leagues, unpaid players, or governance failures, it indirectly assists the destruction of football.



The book **How They Stole the Game** by journalist **David Yallop** is an investigative exposé of rampant corruption within FIFA, particularly during João Havelange's presidency from 1974 to 1998.

Summary of the Book

The central thesis of the book is that the beautiful game of football (soccer) was "stolen" from the fans and turned into a multi-billion dollar business riven with suspicious deals, secret payments, and widespread abuse of power at the highest levels.

- **Focus on João Havelange:** Yallop identifies Havelange, the former FIFA president, as the "Godfather of football," who transformed the organisation from a sports body into a highly profitable, and allegedly corrupt, commercial enterprise.
- **Commercialisation and Corruption:** The book details how Havelange leveraged his position to sign lucrative sponsorship and television deals, creating immense wealth that was mismanaged and siphoned off through illicit practices.
- **Political Manoeuvring:** It reveals stories of backroom deals and vote-rigging, including allegations surrounding the 2006 World Cup bid, suggesting that decisions about host countries and leadership were often based on personal enrichment and power rather than the good of the sport.
- **Sepp Blatter's Role:** The book also implicates Sepp Blatter, Havelange's protégé and successor, showing how the system of corruption continued under his leadership, with Blatter being elected uncontested amidst ongoing allegations.
- **Impact on the Fans:** Ultimately, Yallop argues that the fans are the real losers, as the integrity and romance of the game are overshadowed by the greed and sleaze of the governing body.

The book is considered a classic piece of investigative writing that accurately predicted and laid the groundwork for the major FIFA corruption scandal that erupted years later, in 2015.

RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY TO CREATE AND PROMOTE LEGENDS & LEGACIES

The media has the right to **create heroes, frame narratives, and decide what becomes history**. Legends are not created by trophies alone. They are created by **stories repeated over time**.

Clubs provide platforms, players perform, and **Media immortalizes**.

Example:

- Heroes such as Pele, Maradona, Cruyff, Messi and Ronaldo, media storytelling turned great players into eternal legends.
- Clubs like Manchester United, Barcelona, and AC Milan became global institutions through sustained media narratives.

In India, many national football heroes faded into obscurity due to poor documentation and inconsistent media attention. Local clubs disappear, and with them, their histories, because no one told their stories. No one knows the pain of club owners because our press misses them.

RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY TO BE AN EDUCATOR AND REFORMER

Media has the right to analyse football beyond results, educate fans about systems, structures, and economics and shape public understanding.

Football literacy is as important as football passion.

Media must:

- Explain league structures, promotion–relegation, and club licensing
- Educate fans on football business, governance, and economics
- Expose monopoly, conflict of interest, and mismanagement
- Encourage reform, not hero-worship of administrators

Example:

- European media debates Financial Fair Play, ownership models, fan ownership, and league reforms openly.
- Sports media in cricket educated Indians about auctions, revenue sharing, and player contracts—creating an informed fan base.

In Indian football, the media often reduces discussion to coaches or players in/out, match result and social media hype. **On most days, Indian football struggles to find space in the Indian media lost between the noise of cricket and the glamour of European football.**

This keeps fans emotional but **uninformed**. An uninformed fan base is easy to manipulate.

MEDIA AS A WATCHDOG, NOT A CHEERLEADER

When the media becomes a PR agency, football suffers; a silent spectator, football decays. **When the media becomes a fearless watchdog, football reforms.**

The media must remember that the **administrators come and go. Football remains. History will judge the media's role.**

Sports journalists must be changemakers, not just commentators!!

WHEN JOURNALISTS BUILT MODERN SPORT

Some of the most important institutions in global sport were not created by federations or governing bodies, but by journalists and reform-minded outsiders who saw what administrators could not or would not.

The European Cup & the Ballon d'Or: Journalism Creates Football's Biggest Stage

After receiving reports from his journalists on the hugely successful South American Championship of

Champions in 1948, **Gabriel Hanot**, editor of **L'Équipe**, recognised a glaring absence in European football: a true continental club competition.

Along with colleague **Jacques Ferran**, Hanot championed the idea of a **European Cup**, challenging national federations and clubs to think beyond borders. Despite initial resistance, the tournament was launched in 1955, eventually evolving into what we now know as the **UEFA Champions League**, the most prestigious club competition in world football.

Hanot's influence did not stop there. In 1956, through **France Football**, he introduced the **Ballon d'Or**, the most prestigious award designed to recognise the best footballer in Europe. What began as a journalistic initiative is now football's most iconic individual honour.

Women's Tennis and Gladys Heldman: Power from the Margins

Gladys Medalie Heldman was not a federation official. She was a tennis player, promoter, manager, and magazine publisher, the founder of **World Tennis magazine**.

At a time when women players were paid a fraction of men's earnings and treated as expendable, Heldman took a stand. As a manager, she supported **Billie Jean King** and eight other women players who dared to challenge the establishment.

Heldman played a central role in forming the **Virginia Slims Circuit** in the early 1970s, a breakaway professional tour that guaranteed women players contracts and prize money. This circuit later became the foundation of today's WTA Tour.

The Tour de France: Media Creates a Sporting Giant

The **Tour de France**, today the world's most famous cycling race, was born not out of sporting policy but media competition. In 1903, French journalist **Henri Desgrange** and his newspaper **L'Auto** created the race to revive declining newspaper sales. The idea was simple but radical: a multi-day, gruelling cycling race circling France itself.

What began as a marketing strategy quickly became a national obsession and then a global sporting spectacle. More than a century later, the Tour de France remains the pinnacle of professional cycling.

Journalism never ends with reporting, at least in sports.

“Our duty is to encourage everyone in his struggle to live up to his own highest idea, and strive at the same time to make the ideal as near as possible to the Truth.”

Swami Vivekananda

7

AIFF, THE LION KING OF INDIAN FOOTBALL

**"Weakness leads to slavery.
Weakness is death."**

Swami Vivekananda

POWER WITHOUT PURPOSE

AIFF behaves like a **lion, the self-proclaimed king of the jungle**. It roars, it dominates territory, it decides who can move and who cannot. But an important question arises:

Who made the lion the king of the jungle?

No animal elected the lion. No democratic process crowned it. The title **“king”** exists only in stories told and repeated over time.

Similarly, AIFF is treated as the unquestioned authority of Indian football, not because it created football, developed it, or protected it, but because **everyone accepted the myth of supremacy without questioning its competency and accountability**.

THE MYTH OF KINGSHIP

In nature:

- The lion is not the strongest animal
- Not the smartest
- Not the most hardworking
- Not the protector of the jungle

The lion:

- Hunts for itself
- Protects its own pride

- Defends territory only for survival

It does **not**:

- Empower other animals
- Build ecosystems
- Protect weaker species
- Ensure the balance of nature

The jungle survives **despite** the lion, not because of it.

NOW REPLACE “LION” WITH AIFF

Who gave AIFF power?

- Not clubs
- Not players
- Not fans
- Not allied professionals

AIFF’s authority comes from:

- Recognition by FIFA and AFC

That is **bureaucratic power**, not moral or developmental legitimacy.

If AIFF truly wants to be the “king” of Indian football, then its role should resemble a **guardian**, not a predator.

Small questions...

1. Does the Lion Initiate Development?

No. A lion does not:

- Teach cubs of other species
- Improve the living conditions of the jungle
- Create food chains

Similarly, ask:

- Did AIFF create strong club ecosystems?
- Did it develop sustainable leagues?
- Did it build grassroots independent of politics?

Development requires **planning, patience, and sacrifice**, not dominance.

2. Does the Lion Protect Other Animals?

No. A lion:

- Kills weaker animals
- Dominates territory
- Eliminates competition

Now compare:

- Small clubs collapse, AIFF is silent
- Leagues collapsed, AIFF is trying to milk the dead cow

- Players are unpaid, and AIFF is helpless
- Clubs owned leagues, AIFF opposes its

Protection is selective and self-serving.

3. Does the Lion Protect the Jungle?

No. The jungle is protected by balance, diversity and cooperation between species. The lion contributes nothing to ecological governance.

Similarly:

- Football survives through clubs, competitions, fans, and players
- AIFF neither owns football nor created it
- Yet it controls access while avoiding responsibility

That is **control without stewardship**.

FOOTBALL DOES NOT NEED A LION IT NEEDS A GARDENER

Football ecosystems grow when the governing body behaves like:

- A **gardener**, not a predator
- A **referee**, not a player
- A **facilitator**, not a monopolist

A gardener nurtures growth, removes weeds carefully, and ensures sunlight and water reach all plants. AIFF today behaves like a lion sitting on the grass, roaring about authority, while the jungle dries up.

THE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH

Indian football existed:

- Before AIFF

AIFF was founded in 1937. **Mohun Bagan** was founded on 15 August 1889, and **East Bengal** was founded in 1920. These clubs are older than AIFF. Please give them some respect.

- Outside AIFF

Sevens, the saviour of Kerala football, is not under the clutches of AIFF or Kerala Football Association.

- Will exist without AIFF

Just like the jungle existed before lions and will exist after them. The real kings of football are:

- Clubs (who create matches)
- Players (who create performance)
- Fans (who create value)

A governing body is only a **service provider**, not a ruler.

FINAL QUESTION

If the lion:

- Does not develop
- Does not protect
- Does not nurture
- Does not sacrifice

Then why should the jungle obey it?

And if AIFF:

- Does not grow football
- Does not protect stakeholders
- Does not ensure fairness
- Does not enable competition

Then **why should Indian football fear it?**

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HOW TO WRESTLE WITH THE AIFF

**"Be brave! Be strong! Be fearless!
Fight as long as there is any life in
you! Even though you know that
you are going to be killed, fight till
you are killed! Don't die of fright!
Die fighting!"**

Swami Vivekananda

There is no wrestling in football.

When we were kids, we wrestled with those who played cricket just to get space to play football. Today, in India, you have to wrestle **to be allowed** to play football.



We love the proverb **“Never wrestle with a pig.”** Often attributed to George Bernard Shaw, it warns us against engaging in futile battles with unreasonable opponents, because you end up dirty, tired, and the pig enjoys it.

But **what if survival itself demands a struggle?**

Today, the future of professional football clubs, players, coaches, and allied sports professionals in India is under threat due to the adamant and opaque stance of the All India Football Federation (AIFF). Walking away is not an option. Silence is not neutrality; it is surrender. If survival demands wrestling with the pig, then we must wrestle.

FROM SAMA TO DANDA

Ancient Indian statecraft offers us a strategic framework: **Sama, Dana, Bheda, and Danda**—four graduated methods to resolve conflict.

- **Sama** (conciliation and persuasion)
- **Dana** (incentives and compromise)
- **Bheda** (exposing contradictions, creating pressure through dissent)
- **Danda** (coercive action, resistance, punishment—used only as a last resort)

Rooted in texts like the **Arthashastra**, these principles prioritise diplomacy and negotiation, but accept confrontation when justice and survival are at stake.

Clubs, players, and leagues have exhausted themselves with **Sama, Dana, and Bheda**. Doors have remained closed. Concerns have been ignored. Compromises have been one-sided.

What remains is **Danda**, not violence, not chaos, but **organised, principled resistance**.

India is a peace-loving nation. Our freedom struggle was largely non-violent. So here are **three peaceful but powerful ways to wrestle with the AIFF**.

1. GANDHI GIRI: COLLECTIVE MORAL RESISTANCE

No explanation needed. Every Indian understands **Gandhi Giri**. If not, the Bollywood movie *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*.

Sport preaches equality, fairness, teamwork, and ethics. Ironically, the sports business has often betrayed these values from its very inception. Early professional leagues across the world thrived by exploiting players in many ways, such as low or no wages, restrictive contracts, and clauses that treated athletes like property.

THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

Brotherhood of Professional Baseball Players, the first-ever players' union, was formed in 1885 to fight the infamous **reserve clause**, which bound players to clubs even after contracts expired. Early efforts failed, but persistence paid off.

In 1965, players reorganised as the **Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA)** and appointed **Marvin Miller**, a seasoned trade union negotiator. By 1968, baseball had its first Collective Bargaining Agreement. Players gained:

- Fair wages
- Pension schemes
- Neutral arbitration instead of owner-controlled commissioners

The result? A transformed industry where athletes became stakeholders, not servants.

STRIKES THAT CHANGED SPORTS FOREVER

Across the world, peaceful strikes and boycotts reshaped sport:

- **MLB** strikes and lockouts (1994–95, 2021–22)
- **NFL** strikes and lockouts (1974–2011)
- **NBA** lockouts (1998–99, 2011)
- **NHL** lockouts, including the cancelled 2004–05 season



- English footballers abolished the maximum wage in 1961 through a strike threat
- Serie A players delayed the 2011–12 season
- Norwegian players forced reforms through short strikes
- Tennis players boycotted Wimbledon in 1973 under the ATP

INDIA IS NOT AN EXCEPTION

Dipika Pallikal's boycott of the National Squash Championships for 5 years exposed gender pay inequality. Her peaceful resistance forced reform. Equal prize money followed.

Gandhi Giri works when it is collective, disciplined, and morally consistent.

2. KANOON GIRI: FIGHTING IN COURTROOMS, NOT STREETS

When numbers are insufficient for strikes, the battlefield shifts to law.

Curt Flood lost his case against baseball's reserve clause in 1972, but his sacrifice triggered reforms that led to free agency in 1975 and the **Curt Flood Act (1998)**.

Oscar Robertson's antitrust lawsuit in the NBA dismantled perpetual player control and laid the foundation for modern free agency across sports.

EU competition law has repeatedly held sports federations accountable:

- Governing bodies are subject to competition law when they engage in commercial activity
- Regulatory power cannot be abused to block new leagues
- Autonomy is conditional on transparency, fairness, and proportionality

The **European Super League (ESL)** and **International Skating Union (ISU)** cases reaffirmed this principle:

Sports bodies cannot be judge, jury, and beneficiary.

INDIAN LEGAL PRECEDENTS

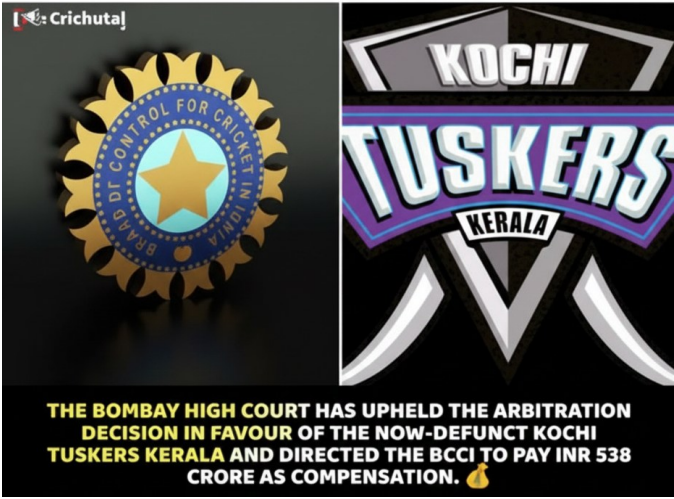
India has its own examples:

- **P.U. Chitra vs Athletic Federation of India (AFI)**
- **Kochi Tuskers Kerala vs BCCI**

Courts have consistently ruled that **sports federations are not above the law**. When governance harms livelihoods, legal resistance becomes a duty.

BOMBAY HIGH COURT RULES IN FAVOUR OF KOCHI TUSKERS

MASSIVE UPDATE FROM THE LEGAL FRONT 🔥



The graphic is a black rectangular box divided into two main sections. The top section contains two logos side-by-side. On the left is the BCCI logo, a circular emblem with a blue border containing the text 'BOARD OF CONTROL FOR CRICKET IN INDIA' and a central blue star. On the right is the Kochi Tuskers Kerala logo, which features the word 'KOCHI' in a grey banner at the top, 'TUSKERS' in large, stylized white letters with a blue outline in the center, and 'KERALA' in a smaller white banner at the bottom. Below the logos, a block of white text reads: 'THE BOMBAY HIGH COURT HAS UPHELD THE ARBITRATION DECISION IN FAVOUR OF THE NOW-DEFUNCT KOCHI TUSKERS KERALA AND DIRECTED THE BCCI TO PAY INR 538 CRORE AS COMPENSATION. 💰'. In the top left corner of the graphic, there is a small red and white logo with the text 'Cricchutal'.

THE BOMBAY HIGH COURT HAS UPHELD THE ARBITRATION DECISION IN FAVOUR OF THE NOW-DEFUNCT KOCHI TUSKERS KERALA AND DIRECTED THE BCCI TO PAY INR 538 CRORE AS COMPENSATION. 💰

3. DADA GIRI:

BREAK THE BARRIERS, MAKE YOUR WAY

Football teaches us one truth: if the path is blocked, you don't stop, you dribble, you switch flanks, you create space.

When American businessman **Lamar Hunt** was denied an NFL franchise, he didn't beg. He built the **American Football League**. The AFL forced the NFL to merge.

World Championship Tennis (WCT) played a decisive and disruptive role in ending amateurism and accelerating the birth of the **Open Era in tennis (1968)**. While the Open Era is often attributed to the International Tennis Federation (ITF), in reality, WCT was the catalyst that forced the system to change. American sports promoter **David Dixon** started WCT with **Lamar Hunt**.

When women tennis players were underpaid and ignored, **Billie Jean King** and the "Houston Nine" built a rival tour.

When **Kerry Packer** was denied broadcasting rights, **World Series Cricket** revolutionised the game forever.

Every major leap in modern sports came from **breakaway courage**.

Yes, there is risk, just like a bicycle kick or a scorpion kick. But that risk is what makes football beautiful.

FINAL WHISTLE

This is not about defeating the AIFF. This is about **survival, dignity, and the future of Indian football.**

Every reformer mentioned here risked careers, money, and reputation. But without them, modern professional sport would not exist.

Sometimes, wrestling with the pig is unavoidable. When that moment comes, **wrestle clean, wrestle together, and wrestle with purpose.**

Because the goal is not to win the fight; **The goal is to save the game.**

"Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women, giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost, for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen".

Swami Vivekananda

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INDIA 2066- ROADMAP TO BECOME FOOTBALL SUPERPOWER

"Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life – think of it, dream of it, and live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, and every part of your body, be full of that idea and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success."

Swami Vivekananda

THE GOAL FOR INDIAN FOOTBALL

Anyone can criticise anyone. That is the easiest job in the world. So far, we criticised all, but suggested alternatives. That was **firefighting**. That was **survival mode**. We are not satisfied with survival. Our ambition is bigger.

We want India to become a football superpower.

DREAM, GOAL, COMMITMENT, ACTION

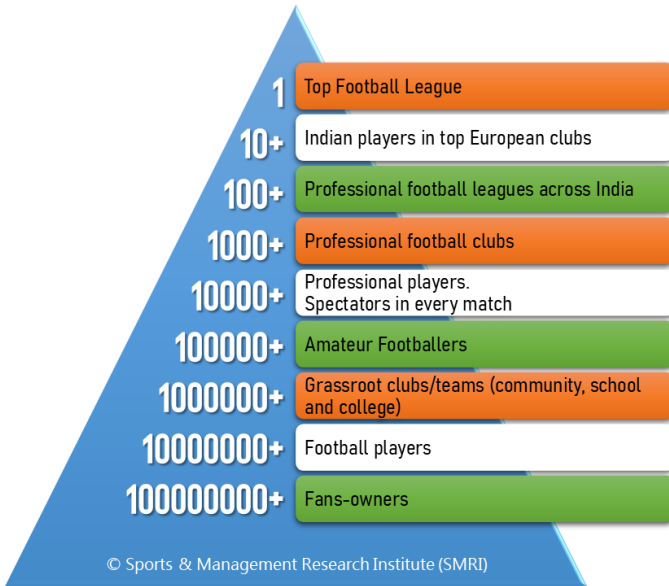
**“Dreams without goals are just dreams...
Without commitment, you’ll never start.
Without consistency, you’ll never finish.”**

Denzel Washington

Dreams need goals. Goals need systems. We **dream** that **India will become a Top 10 football nation**, and we set the **goal** for our dream. **India wins the FIFA Football World Cup in 2066**

This is not emotion. This is **a goal with an action plan**.

WHAT INDIA NEEDS TO WIN THE FOOTBALL WORLD CUP



WHAT HISTORY TEACHES US

Before asking "Can India do this?", we must ask: **How did others do it?**

Germany, France, and Argentina did not become football powers by accident. They followed **clear structural principles**.

GERMANY: SYSTEM BEFORE STARS

What Germany Did

- After failure at Euro 2000, Germany rebuilt its football from the bottom up
- Mandatory youth academies for all professional clubs
- Strong promotion–relegation pyramid
- Heavy investment in coaching education
- Football embedded in schools and communities

Key Numbers

- 25,000 football clubs
- 7 million registered players
- Fan-owned club culture (50+1 rule)
- The 2006 World Cup hosted & 2014 World Cup won

What we need to learn: Germany did not wait for 'talented individuals.' It **manufactured talent through structure.**

FRANCE: DIVERSITY + GRASSROOTS = WORLD CHAMPIONS

What France Did

- Massive public investment in grassroots football
- Regional academies linked to local clubs
- Clear player pathway from street → club → academy → national team
- Strong integration of immigrant and working-class communities

Key Numbers

- 15,000 football clubs
- 2 million registered players
- National training centres like Clairefontaine
- World Cup winners: 1998 & 2018

What we need to learn: France didn't depend on elite schools or rich cities. It turned **social diversity into sporting strength**. India's diversity is not a weakness. It is an untapped advantage.

ARGENTINA: FOOTBALL AS CULTURE, NOT INDUSTRY

What Argentina Did

- Football clubs as community institutions
- Fan-owned, member-driven club system
- Children grow up playing football everywhere
- Clubs act as social, cultural, and sporting centres

Key Numbers

- 3,000+ registered clubs
- Millions play informally every day
- Constant export of players to Europe
- World Cup winners: 1978, 1986, 2022

What we need to learn: Argentina proves that **money is not the first requirement**. Culture, competition, and community come first. India already has passion. It lacks only structure.

WHAT INDIA NEEDS

1: ONE TRUE TOP FOOTBALL LEAGUE

India must adopt a **proper pyramid league system**:

- Open leagues only
- Promotion and relegation guaranteed
- No mixing of closed franchise leagues with merit-based competitions

Germany rebuilt its football after Euro 2000 by strengthening its league pyramid and club academies. Result: **World Cup 2014. India must do the same without shortcuts.**

2: 10+ INDIAN PLAYERS IN TOP EUROPEAN CLUBS

Our grassroots system must consistently produce players capable of playing in top European leagues. This requires:

- Maximum match exposure from a young age
- Advanced coaching education
- Modern sports science, nutrition, and injury management

Like **Argentina and Brazil**, national teams that benefited from their citizens playing in the top European clubs to win the Football World Cup, India can benefit from the experience of Indian players playing in Europe.

Europe will not develop our players for us. We must first make them good enough to be exported.

3: 100+ PROFESSIONAL LEAGUES & 1,000+ PROFESSIONAL CLUBS

India has **750+ districts**.

- Small districts → 1 club each
- Big districts → 2 or more clubs each

This alone creates **1,000+ clubs**.

These clubs must be:

- **Fan-owned cooperative sports clubs (societies)**
- Rooted in community identity
- Democratically run (like **Real Madrid or FC Barcelona**)

With these clubs (plus existing institutional and company teams), India can easily sustain 100+ professional leagues across divisions.

Germany has 25,000 clubs. Argentina has fewer clubs, but treats each as a **cultural institution**.

4: 10,000+ PROFESSIONAL INDIAN FOOTBALLERS

These 1,000+ clubs will create:

- Salaried footballers
- Stable careers
- Competitive depth

Argentina exports players consistently, not because it is rich, but because **players grow in competitive environments from childhood**. Footballers need leagues, not luck.

5: 10,000+ Spectators per Match

Each club must have:

- **1 lakh owner-members**
- Even 10% attendance = full stadiums

Crowds create:

- Atmosphere
- Revenue
- Accountability
- Mentally strong footballers

Argentina proves one thing clearly: **Football survives where fans feel ownership**. Empty stadiums will kill football culture.

6: 1 Lakh Amateur Footballers

A strong professional system depends on a massive amateur base.

Amateur football:

- Keeps talent flowing
- Allows late bloomers
- Builds football IQ

Amateur football is not secondary. It is **the engine room of professionals**.

7: 10 Lakh Grassroots Clubs

Schools, colleges, and communities must become football hubs.

- Grassroots clubs must include:
- Community clubs
- School sports clubs under school sports leagues
- College sports clubs under college sports leagues

Germany's success is built on:

- Massive club density
- Continuous competition

Talent emerges where games are frequent.

8: 1 Crore Indians Playing Football

A football nation needs mass participation.

- More players = more competition
- More competition = better players

World Cups are won by probability, not by hope.

9: 10 Crore Fan-Owners

At least **10 crore Indians**, investing **₹500 minimum**, must become **owner-members** of football clubs.

That creates:

- Financial stability
- Democratic control
- Protection from collapse

Germany's 50+1 rule and Argentina's member-driven clubs prove one thing: **Football is safest in the hands of its fans.**

IS THIS POSSIBLE?

Yes. Germany took 14 years (2000–2014). France took 20 years (1980s–1998). Argentina took generations. India has **time**, if it starts now.

Imagine **“Har Zilla, Ek Football Club”**, a simple National Call, just like **“Har Ghar Tiranga”** by the Indian Prime Minister.

“One District One Football Club”

Every Indian district will get at least one football club in one month. (Forget the red tapism. We applied to register a fan-owned cooperative football club 10 years ago. Not yet got registration due to administrative ignorance). The government doesn't need to spend money. AIFF doesn't need to take pain. We don't need to wait for the mercy of the rich investors.

When Will India Qualify for the World Cup?

Not by luck. Not by shortcuts. If this system is built honestly:

India qualifies by 2042

India wins by 2066

**"Each work has to pass through
these stages — ridicule, opposition,
and then acceptance. Those who
think ahead of their time are sure to
be misunderstood."**

Swami Vivekananda

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**LET'S
PLAY FOR
INDIA**

**"Take risks in your life. If you win
you can lead! If you loose, you can
guide!"**

Swami Vivekananda

When a nation's space mission or military operation fails, the Government does not look away. It immediately asks the concerned authorities four hard questions:

1. What happened?
2. Why did it happen?
3. Who is responsible?
4. What will you do to ensure this never happens again?

And if the answers are unsatisfactory, heads roll. Accountability is non-negotiable when national prestige, public money, and global reputation are at stake.

Now ask a simple question:

What has the government done or what is it planning to do about the Indian football crisis?

Government Responsibility Is Not Optional. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) is not a private hobby club. It receives government grants, represents India on international football pitches and claims authority in the name of the nation.

When India performs poorly in global football year after year, it is not merely a sporting failure; it is a failure of governance. The **government has both the right and the responsibility to question AIFF.**

THE AUTONOMY MYTH

AIFF often hides behind the argument: "We are autonomous. The government has no right to interfere." This argument collapses the moment public money enters the picture. **Government grants come from taxes paid by ordinary citizens for hunger (taxes on food), sweat (income tax, professional tax) and even for pain (taxes on medicine).**

Public money demands public accountability. Autonomy cannot be an excuse for incompetence.

LEARN FROM SUCCESS: BCCI VS AIFF

The BCCI has demonstrated that competent sports governance is **strong domestic structures, financial self-sufficiency and consistent international performance.**

Indian football cannot improve internationally unless domestic football improves first. Governance failure at the top directly translates into failure on the pitch.

PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

The government must formally assess sports governing bodies using the following measurable criteria:



PRIZE MODEL
(SPORTS ASSOCIATION PERFORMANCE MODEL)
© Sports & Management Research Institute (SMRI)

End Free Money. Start Responsible Funding. Government grants should not be free handouts. They must be **repayable, performance-linked and time-bound.**

Every sports governing body must become self-sufficient within a pre-agreed period, say three years. Once that period ends, government funding must stop.

Just as governments shut down loss-making factories and non-performing public institutions, they must also withdraw financial support from unproductive and incompetent sports bodies.

PUBLIC MONEY IS SACRED

India cannot afford to waste public money on useless, unaccountable, and visionless sports administrations. Supporting sports does not mean subsidising failure forever.

If we are serious about playing and winning for India, then sports governance must be treated with the same seriousness as national security, science, and infrastructure.

No performance. No funding. No excuses.

11

THE ULTIMATE IMPACT

**“Therefore, to make a great future
India, the whole secret lies in
organisation, accumulation of
power, coordination of wills....
Being of one mind is the secret of
society... That is the secret -
accumulation of will-power,
coordination, bringing them all, as
it were, into one focus.”**

Swami Vivekananda

WHAT IF INDIA BUILDS A SMART FOOTBALL ECOSYSTEM LIKE EUROPE?

This is not fantasy. This is **basic sports economics + political will**.

THE CURRENT REALITY (SHAMEFUL BASELINE)

- Fewer than **30** professional or semi-professional football clubs
- Fewer than **500** professional footballers
- Fewer than **500** professional matches annually

For a nation of **1.4 billion**, this is not underperformance; this is **systemic sabotage**.

Indicator	Europe	Japan	USA	India
Population (approx.)	450M	125M	330M	1.4B
Professional clubs	10,000+	60+	100+	<30
Registered players	Millions	0.5–1M	Millions	Very limited
Football as an industry	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Govt role	Regulator	Facilitator	Enabler	Grant-giver
Self-sufficient clubs	Majority	Majority	Majority	Almost none

A 'NAYA' INDIAN FOOTBALL: A SMART & STRONG FOOTBALL ECOSYSTEM

Structure

- **1,000+ professional football clubs**
- **20,000+ professional footballers**
- **100+ leagues**, with 10 clubs per league
- **9,000 professional matches per year**

This is **normal** in Europe. It is the baseline football infrastructure.

THE SPORTS ECONOMICS: FOOTBALL AS A PEOPLE-POWERED INDUSTRY

Community Ownership & Capital Formation

If each club has:

- **1,00,000 registered members**
- Each member invests a minimum of **₹500**

Then:

- **₹5 crore per club**
- **₹5,000 crore total grassroots investment**

No government funding. Just **people investing in their local club**.

MATCHDAY ECONOMY ALONE (NO TV, NO SPONSORS)

Per match:

- 10,000 spectators
- ₹100 average ticket price
- ₹50 average food/refreshment spend

Revenue per match: **₹15,00,000**

Annual revenue (9,000 matches):

₹13,500 crore

Government tax revenue (10%):

₹1,350 crore

EMPLOYMENT: FOOTBALL AS A JOB CREATOR

Direct Employment

- **20,000+ professional footballers**

Club-Level Employment

Each club employs approx **300 professionals**:

- Coaches
- Support team
- Sports Management professionals

- Groundsmen
- Security
- Media & marketing teams

Total club jobs:

$300 \times 1,000 \text{ clubs} = \mathbf{3,00,000 \text{ jobs}}$

Total Direct Jobs Created

3,20,000+ jobs

(Without counting transport, tourism, hospitality, vendors, and media)

THIS IS THE SMALL PICTURE

We have **deliberately excluded**:

- Sponsorship revenue
- Broadcasting rights
- Merchandising
- Digital content
- Football tourism
- Academy licensing

Even **without these**, football emerges as a **mass employment, mass taxation, mass participation industry**.



NURTURE OR KILL: THE GOVERNMENT'S CHOICE:

Football is not a liability.

Football is a **cash cow** waiting to be nurtured.

The ball is now in the government's court:

- **Nurture this ecosystem** → jobs, revenue, pride, global relevance
- **Ignore or misgovern it** → kill a ₹10,000+ crore industry

This is not about sport. This is about **economic vision, governance courage, and national ambition.**

Just think of what we missed so far!! Just imagine what we are going to miss even if we don't act to save Indian football!!

Crores of rupees... Hundreds of Messis..

India must decide:

**DO WE WANT FOOTBALL AS A
HOBBY OR AS AN INDUSTRY?**

PROVOCATION

In the last few months, many footballers and allied sports professionals have visited me and reached out to discuss the ongoing ISL crisis and possible solutions. These were not casual conversations; they were desperate calls from people whose livelihoods, careers, and futures are tied to Indian football.

We initiated the **“Let’s Save Indian Football”** conclave and attempted to engage influential individuals who have the power to intervene and resolve this crisis. Every effort failed. Every door remained closed.

“A goal is the result of many failed attempts to score a goal. So, never fear to fail. JUST Try for YOUR goal.”

Today, **Indian football club owners are perhaps the most helpless businesspeople in the world.** They do not have the freedom to operate their clubs as sustainable businesses. They do not have the right to earn profits. They do not even have the right to escape losses. No industry can survive under such conditions.

Indian football players are among the most vulnerable athletes in the world. They begin their careers far earlier than the general population and are forced to end them much earlier, often before the age of 35. Their professional lifespan is short, fragile, and unprotected. Injuries, poor form, club closures, suspended leagues, or the loss of even a single season can permanently damage their careers. Most painfully, there is no certainty, security, or structured pathway for life after retirement.

Then there are the sports professionals working with clubs and leagues, like coaches, analysts, medical staff, administrators, and media professionals, whose livelihoods collapse the moment the ecosystem collapses. This crisis directly affects thousands of families.

Everyone involved needs a permanent, stable, and credible solution. The All India Football Federation must stop this comedic power struggle that is slowly destroying Indian football. This is no longer an administrative issue. It is a human tragedy for players and professionals who earn their living from the game.

Before this turns into a national sporting disaster, AIFF must immediately stop this war. **AIFF must recognise its responsibilities. AIFF must respect the rights of clubs. AIFF must protect players. AIFF must value fans.**

The root cause of this crisis is the ignorance of fundamental sports management principles. A successful football ecosystem is built on people, passion, professionalism, and profit, not on politics and policies.

We must become more professional. We must become more proactive.

“In football, 11 opponents and their fans work relentlessly to stop you from scoring and to score against you. That is their duty, their karma. Your karma is to score goals by overcoming them with your teammates.”

Don't forget this basic lesson football teaches us.

Sincerely in Sports,

SIJIN B. T. An angry old Indian football fan

**“Arise! Awake! and stop not until
the goal is reached.”**

Swami Vivekananda



SIJIN B T

Sports Management Guru | Business Coach
Motivational Speaker | Author | Sports Consultant
Management Consultant | Creative Consultant
Educationalist | Retail Trainer | Ludologist

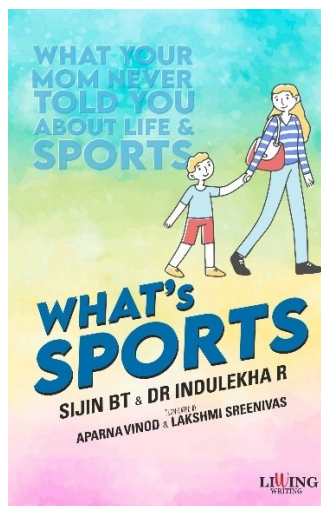
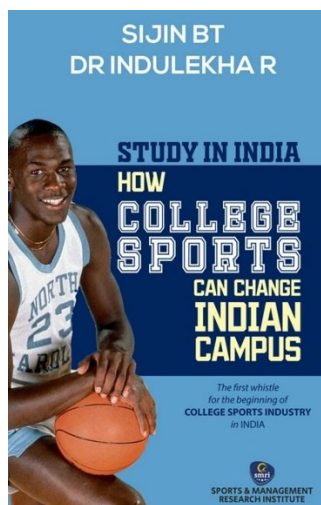
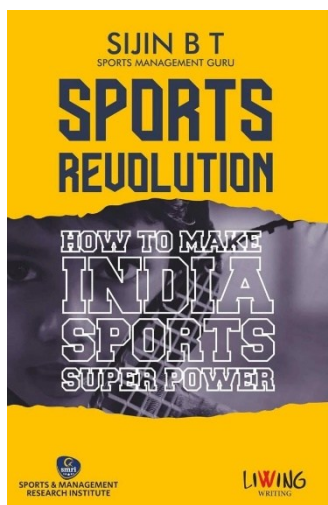
HE IS THE PROMOTER OF

Fan-Owned Cooperative Sports Clubs
College Sports Leagues | School Sports Leagues
3Wheeler Racing | Childhood Olympiad
Labour Olympiad | Her Games | Everyday Sports Leagues
Heritage Games

HE IS THE DEVELOPER/DESIGNER OF

Management By Dreams | 11Ps of Sports Marketing Mix
7Es of Sports | Passenger Rights | Creed of Bus Workers
5Ss of Athlete Management | PRIZE model of Sports
Administration | Superbmarket- HR model for Retailers
Trimurthi Model HR Management | KHELDO Principles

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YOUR **NEXT MOVE** IN
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"The most honest football book India didn't ask for, but desperately needs."

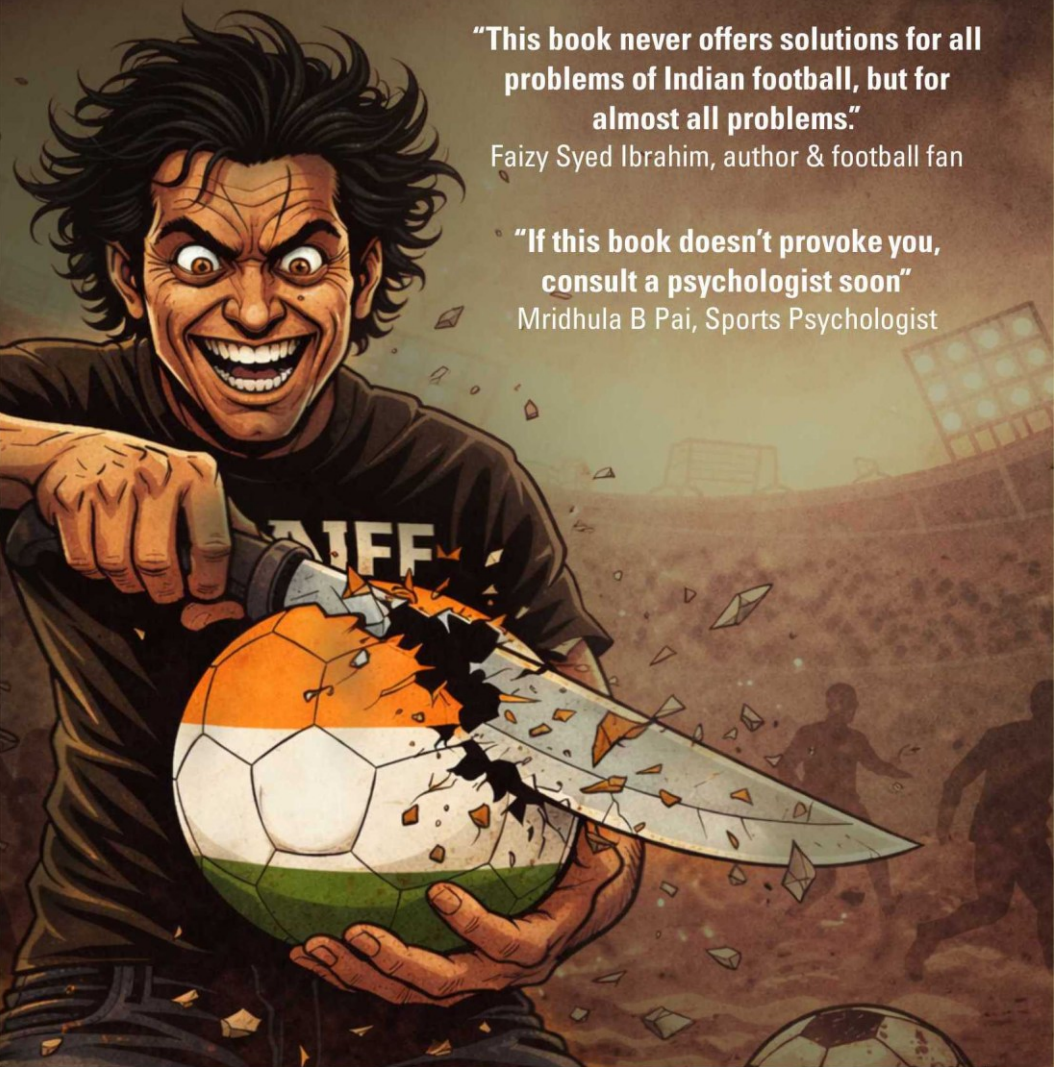
Somu Joseph, Manjappada

"This book never offers solutions for all problems of Indian football, but for almost all problems."

Faizy Syed Ibrahim, author & football fan

"If this book doesn't provoke you, consult a psychologist soon"

Mridhula B Pai, Sports Psychologist



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